

Hafa Adai!

Garapan revitalization work to start near end of January. **PAGE 3**
Lawmakers, Palacios, Apatang discuss state of NMI economy. **PAGE 5**

\$1

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Villagomez

Villagomez eyes special committee to handle any BOOST investigation

» **Speaker says further BOOST investigation may also start from the Senate**

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-

Saipan) has disclosed that he is looking at possibly creating a special committee to focus on the Torres administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity and

Stability Together, or BOOST Program, should an investigation need to be carried out further.

Villagomez said Tuesday that he is looking at possibly

appointing seven House members to that special committee that will be tasked not so much of redoing the 22nd House committees'

See **BOOST** on Page 4

BENAVENTE RESIGNS DOL POST

Staffler is acting DOL chief

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The resignation of former Department of Labor secretary Vicky Benavente was made official yesterday and former represen-



Staffler



Benavente

tative Leila Staffler has been chosen as acting DOL chief in her stead.

Benavente, who has served as DOL secretary for years, tendered her resignation last Dec. 31, 2022, and her exit has been lowkey since yesterday.

"I submitted my resignation on Dec.

31, 2022. It was quiet," Benavente told *Saipan Tribune*.

Yesterday, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios officially issued a memorandum informing government departments of the appointment of Staffler as acting DOL chief and confirming Benavente's resignation.

Palacios also appointed last Wednesday Paul Tenorio as the executive

See **LABOR** on Page 4

Medical Referral allocated just \$1 for FY2023

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

"We need help."

So says Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. CEO Esther Muña after sharing that the CHCC Medical Referral program was only allocated \$1 for fiscal year 2023 from the CNMI general fund.

In a news briefing last

See **CHCC** on Page 4



Muña

NOW YOU SEE HER, NOW YOU DON'T

The full moon peers behind clouds as it hangs over Garapan and the Philippine Sea early Saturday morning as a band of rain clouds blow through.

MARK FARMER

GCEA MSP Christmas Decorating Contest brought out the holiday spirit in schools

TOGETHER, WE CAN

By **GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS**

Special to the Saipan Tribune



The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers had the pleasure of welcoming new and returning participants to its second Christmas Decorating Contest in December 2022. As part of the GCEA Marianas School Pride Campaign, which aims to encourage students to take pride in their campuses through beautification activities, this year's contest was extra special as we encouraged CNMI schools to decorate their entrances to make their campuses festive for the holidays.

See column on page 11

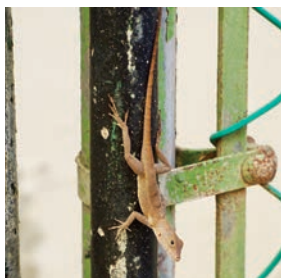
INSIDE



BUSINESS

The Hut is not just for take-outs anymore; it is now a full-fledged restaurant in Garapan.

PAGE 11



OFF THE WALL

Lizards that once dwelled in forests have genetically morphed to survive life in the city.

PAGE 18



LIFE & STYLE

No, the public has not tired of hearing about Prince Harry. Sales for "Spare" are soaring right now.

PAGE 19



SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.



GOT A NEWS TIP?

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Local

NMTech spring 2023 classes set to begin Jan. 17

By LEIGH GASES
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Reporter

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute's spring 2023 semester is set to begin on Tuesday, Jan. 17.

Seven courses are being offered: Hotel and Restaurant, Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts: Level 1, Carpentry CORE + Level 1, HVAC CORE + Level 1, Electrical

WRITE WITH ME!

Who better than you to tell your story?

The Marianas Writers Movement invites everyone who wants to write to join us on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023, from 10am to 12pm at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, VTC room. This write-in is informal. Bring your own laptop, iPad, or notebook and pen. It's free.

Marianas Writers Movement wants you to write your stories! We need the diversity and complexity that comes from a multitude of voices. Our goal is to help you start a writing habit for 2023! Find us online at <https://marianaswritersmovement.org/>. Join us. (PR)

CORE + Level 1, and Welding CORE + Level 1.

The Hotel and Restaurant course is an American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute certification, which is recognized globally.

The Welding, Electrical, HVAC, and Carpentry courses are National Center for Construction Education and Research certifications, which are recognized in the United States.

New student orientation is today at 9am at the NMTech campus in Lower Base.

In-house scholarships are available for Construction

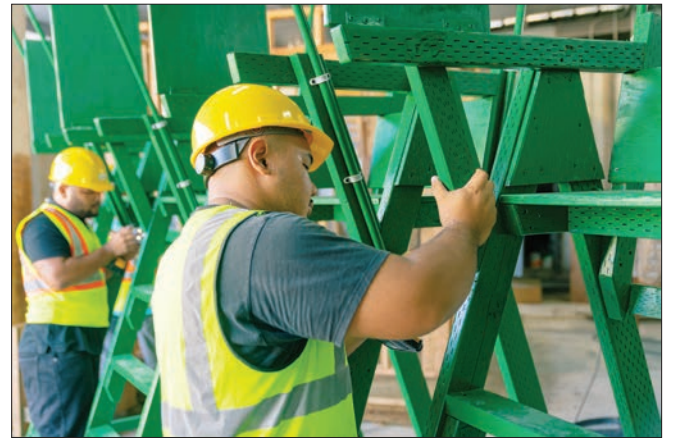
Courses. Other scholarships such as CNMI Scholarship, SHEFA, and WIOA are accepted.

"We are excited for our new students to start next week. Our instructors are excited and ready to teach their skills and knowledge to the new students. We are also thrilled that we have a good number of students returning to campus to further their education at a higher level in Welding, Electrical, and Culinary Arts," said Benjamin Babauta, NMTech marketing coordinator.

For more information, con-

tact (670) 235-6684, visit their website at www.nmtechnmi.org, or email admissions@nmtechnmi.org. Also check out their Facebook and Instagram pages CNMI.NMTI for updates.

Last November, NMTech conferred certificates to 74 graduates of seven courses in the first awards ceremony held for its students. The classes of 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 completed either courses in Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, Hotel and Restaurant, Construction-Core, Construction-Elec-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Northern Marianas Technical Institute carpentry students are seen building umpire chairs for the 2022 NMI Pacific Mini Games.

trical, Construction-HVAC, or Construction-Welding—with

almost half of the percentage of graduates being women.

\$25K cash bail for man who allegedly beat and strangled girlfriend

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a \$25,000 cash bail on a man accused of beating and strangling his girlfriend in a fit of rage.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho has imposed a \$25,000 cash bail on Joseph Shane Duenas Aldan who was arrested for allegedly assaulting his girlfriend.

Aldan, 36, is facing charges of assault and battery, strangu-

lation, and disturbing the peace.

After his hearing, Aldan was remanded back to Department of Corrections custody.

According to the complaint against Aldan, his girlfriend said she had been in an "on and off relationship" with him and had been living with him at a bed-and-breakfast in Chalan Kanoa.

She said she left the B&B on Jan. 1, 2023, at about 4pm after an argument with Aldan.

On Jan. 2, she said, she woke up at about 9:45am and saw that

Aldan had sent her over 50 messages, including photos and videos on WhatsApp, and had also called her over 10 times.

The victim said Aldan, in one of his messages, threatened to kill himself with a razor blade if she did not respond.

She claims he also sent photos and a video of himself with cuts on his chest and neck.

She said the messages scared her so she went back to the B&B. She said when she entered Aldan's room it was completely dark, as the TV, window

and lamp were covered.

Aldan then started accusing her of bringing somebody else into his room.

She said when she tried to leave, Aldan approached her from the front, and, with his left arm, elbowed her left chest which caused her to slam against the wall.

When she tried to leave again, she said Aldan elbowed her again, slamming her against the wall.

She said Aldan then grabbed her and threw her

to the floor before allegedly standing behind her and using his arms to strangle her for about 10 seconds.

She said she screamed for help.


The victim said when Aldan finally let her go, she ran outside and called for help.

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Garapan revitalization work to start near end of January

By LEIGH GASES

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Reporter

In a notice to Garapan business owners and the public by the Garapan Revitalization Task Force and the Office of Planning and Development, the Garapan Revitalization Project which broke ground last November 2022, will commence its four-phase plan toward the end of January 2023 and will continue until November 2024.

The U.S Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, in partnership with the Office of Planning and Development under the Offices of Gov. Arnold Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, is finally starting Phase I of the four-phase project.

The over \$8-million project will be spearheaded by USA Fanter Corp.

After the completion of all four phases, the Garapan Revitalization Project will have transformed the CNMI's tourism hub into a world-class site. The project will repave streets; create on-street parking; construct new concrete curbs, gutters and sidewalks; install new streetlights; and provide extensive landscaping.

Phase I, which is set from the end of January to April 2023, will convert the Paseo

de Marianas Pedestrian Mall into a two-way street. Other affected roads in this phase will cover Plumeria Avenue, between Paseo de Marianas and Micro Beach Road; Ginger Avenue, between Coconut Street and CPL. Derence Jack Road; Coffee Tree Mall, between Coconut Street and CPL. Derence Jack Road; and Royal Palm Avenue, between Coconut Street and CPL. Derence Jack Road.

Phase II, which is set to begin sometime in April until September 2023, will cover Beach Road, between Garapan Street and CPL. Derence Jack Road; Beach Road east side, between CPL. Derence Jack Road and Micro Beach Road; Coconut Street; Date Street; Royal Palm Avenue, between Coconut Street and Paseo de Marianas; and Coffee Tree Mall, between Coconut Street and Paseo de Marianas.

Phase III, which is set to begin sometime in September 2023 until January 2024, covers Beach Road west side, between CPL. Derence Jack Road and Micro Beach Road; Palm Street; Micro Beach Road south side, between Beach Road and Coral Tree Avenue.

Phase IV, set for January 2024 to May 2024, will cover Royal Palm Avenue, between Paseo de Marian-

as and Micro Beach Road; Coffee Tree Mall, between Paseo de Marianas and Micro Beach Road; Ginger Avenue, between Paseo de Marianas and Micro Beach Road; and Plumeria Avenue, between CPL. Derence Jack Road and Coconut Street.

Landscaping maintenance will be done from May 2024 to November 2024.

"The Garapan Revitaliza-

tion Project will transform our main tourist district into a world-class destination. We ask for everyone's patience and support as we begin our construction work by phase. Each phase will take a few months so expect minimal inconveniences as we work toward rehabilitating Garapan Core. The long-term effect this project will have on our economy is tremendous.

Let's get this project moving so our tourists and residents have something new and exciting to look forward to," said Christopher A. Concepcion, Garapan Revitalization Task Force chairman and Office of Planning and Development deputy director, in a statement to the media. "The Garapan Revitalization Task Force and the Office of Planning and Development

under the Offices of Governor Arnold Palacios and Lt. Gov. Dave Apatang are very pleased to see continued progress on this much-anticipated project."

Concepcion said in the notice, "We ask for your continued support and cooperation throughout the two-year project construction period." For more information, contact garapan@opd.gov.mp.

Man who threatened neighbor with gun gets 10 years in prison

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

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REPORTER

The Superior Court has sentenced a man to a 10-years imprisonment after he pleaded guilty to threatening his neighbor with a gun back in September 2022.

Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo sentenced Julian Thomas M. Sablan to 10 years in prison after he pleaded guilty to assault with a dangerous weapon.

The defendant was initially charged with assault with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery, and disturbing the peace. However, pursuant to his plea agreement, all but the assault with a dangerous weapon

charge was waived.

Although Sablan was sentenced to 10 years, he will only be serving four years as his sentence is all suspended except for four years. Govendo also gave Sablan credit for 98 days of time served.

As part of his sentence, Sablan will pay a total of \$300 in court costs and fine. He will also be placed under supervised probation for five years beginning on Sept. 28, 2026, when he is released from prison. In addition, Sablan was also ordered to perform 100 hours of community service.

A repeat offender, Sablan, 33, was arrested in September 2022 for, among other things, pointing a gun at his

neighbor's head at a store in Garapan.

According to the initial complaint against Sablan, the victim said he was walking from his house at Lower MIHA and was headed to a store when he saw a white car to his left driving toward him at high speed.

He said he jumped to avoid the car from hitting him, but the vehicle still hit his left leg, causing him to land on its hood and then fall to the ground.

According to the victim, he did not know the driver at that time until the driver got out of the vehicle and the victim realized that it was his neighbor, Sablan.

The victim said Sablan got out of the car holding

what appeared to be a gun and started walking toward him while he was still on the ground.

He said when he got up, Sablan wrapped his left arm around the back of his neck and pointed a gun to his head.

The victim said he tried to take his phone out from his pocket during the altercation to call the police but Sablan grabbed his phone. The victim said he managed to get his phone back when the storekeeper came out and warned the two that he would call the police.

This prompted Sablan to walk toward the storekeeper and point the gun at him, threatening to go back into the store or he would kill him too.

DeLeon Guerrero confident that Senate understands the separation of powers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE

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REPORTER

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) said yesterday she is confident that it's not just the 23rd Senate leadership but the entire Senate body that understands the separation of powers among the three branches of government.

In her response to Saipan Tribune's question if the Senate will automatically be agreeing with the Palacios-Apatang administration on all its initiatives, DeLeon Guerrero said there will be legislations that may not be compatible with the ideals of either the Executive or Legislative Branch.

However, the Senate president said, setting aside differences and having healthy and productive debates on legislations that will lead to mutually agreeable concessions will help them move forward in achieving the desired goals/initiatives for the CNMI and its people.

"We need to mature beyond reactive emotions and learn to work for the com-



DeLeon Guerrero

mon good of our CNMI people," DeLeon Guerrero said.

Some members of the 22nd House of Representatives had criticized the 22nd Senate before and called it a rubber stamp of then-Torres administration.

Currently, the Senate is composed of two Democrats, three independents, and four Republicans.



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US, Japan poised to agree on shift in Marine unit on Okinawa

WASHINGTON (AP)—Top national security officials from the United States and Japan are expected to agree to changes in the joint defense posture this week as the two nations confront rising threats from North Korea and increasing aggressiveness from China.

U.S. officials say Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet on Wednesday with their Japanese counterparts and plan to issue a joint statement that will adjust, but not increase, the American

troop presence on the island of Okinawa. It also will add a formal mention of space in the longstanding mutual defense treaty the two countries have held, in a nod to the Pentagon's creation of the Space Force and Space Command.

The new agreements to be sealed at the so-called "two-plus-two" meeting will come just ahead of a visit to Washington by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday.

"The leaders will discuss our shared vision of a modernized alliance that will tackle 21st century challenges in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," said Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, on Tuesday. "China certainly will be a topic of discussion with our Japanese allies during the consultative meetings this week."

Ryder declined to provide details on the new agreement.

But U.S. officials said the 12th Marine Regiment currently on Okinawa will trans-

form into a smaller, more rapidly mobile unit—the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment. The new regiment is designed to be better able and equipped to fight an adversary and defend the U.S. and its allies in the region. U.S. officials said the decision will not increase the number of Marines on the island.

Reinforcement of military capability or troops is a sensitive issue for Okinawa, site of one of the bloodiest ground battles at the end of World War II. The island hosts more than

half of the U.S. troops based in Japan, and Okinawans want that number reduced. While there is a growing fear of a Taiwan emergency, many islands in the region are concerned that a defense buildup could increase risks of getting embroiled in war.

The change is part of a broader shift being made across the Marine Corps, as the commandant, Gen. David Berger, aims to make the service better able to operate and fight in contested areas, particularly within striking range of an enemy. That element is critical in the Indo-Pacific, where thousands of U.S. and allied forces are easily within missile—or even rocket—range of both China and North Korea.

One Marine littoral regiment has already been set up in Hawaii, the second would be in Okinawa and another

is planned later this decade, with a possible location being Guam, according to officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans not publicly announced.

Details are still being worked out, but a littoral regiment is made up of roughly 2,000 Marines, and includes a combat team with an anti-ship missile battery, a logistics battalion and an air defense battalion. The current Marine regiment on Okinawa that it would essentially replace includes about 3,400 Marines and sailors. The overall number of Marines on Okinawa would remain about the same, officials said.

Asked about specific announcements, Ryder would only say that the meeting will provide an opportunity for talks on how to modernize the alliance and maintain a stable and secure Indo-Pacific.

BOOST

From page 1

investigation into the BOOST Program, but maybe continuing where they left off.

"But it doesn't necessarily have to start from the House anymore; it can start in the Senate," he said.

BOOST is a project of the previous Office of the Governor, the Department of Finance, and Department of Commerce that aims to provide financial assistance to CNMI businesses and non-profit organizations.

Through BOOST, financial assistance is provided to local businesses and non-profit organizations in the form of grants and business coaching through counseling and training programs.

During the 22nd House final session last Jan. 5, then-representative Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan) stated that even with the thousands of pages of records collected, and the hours of testimony received in the final days before the end of their term, the joint committee has only begun to scratch the surface of the gross waste, abuse, and fraud that have occurred in the BOOST Program.

The 22nd House Ways and Means Committee and the Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee jointly recommended that further legislative investigation into the BOOST Program is needed, and should continue in the 23rd Legislature.

Villagomez said such recommendation seems to be one of the issues, so he might be creating the special committee.

He said it also does not prevent the Senate from doing their oversight and investigation on the BOOST program.

The speaker noted that prior to the closing of the 22nd Legislature, the investigation of the BOOST was done under two committees whose former chairperson are now in the Senate.

Sen. Donald M. Manglo-na (Ind-Rota) used to chair the House Ways and Means Committee, while Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) served as chairwoman of the House JGO.

Villagomez said the 22nd House had put out a public document in a form of a House communication so the investigation on BOOST is up for grabs.

As what was done in the 22nd Legislature, one of the

House members recycled a minority report from the 21st House that prompted the JGO investigation, Villagomez said. The speaker was referring to the JGO investigation into then-governor Ralph DLG Torres' travels and expenditures of public funds.

Villagomez said that before the 22nd Legislature closed, there was discussion whether the joint committee's investigation can be issued as a committee report or House communication.

"So long as we get it out as a public document or public record, we don't have to worry about starting from the scratch again. It can pretty much be reused to reopen the investigation or oversight, if it's needed," he said.

The speaker said the joint committees did not come up with a report on BOOST after failing to meet the 72-hour time required under the Open Government Act.

"So with the Open Government Act, it's very unique. We can suspend certain rules to amend the agenda. Now, if it's a House communication, it's just something that we're just putting out there," he said.

Villagomez said if it's something that requires action, even if they were to suspend

certain rules, to include things that did not meet the 72 hours requirement. they have to give it another session day to act.

"So, say we want to act on a bill right away and it's not on the agenda, we can only add it to the calendar or to the agenda but we cannot touch it until the next session," he said.

So why not just let the current Ways and Means, and the JGO Committees continue the investigation? Villagomez said that one of the things that they had seen in the 22nd House was that, although issues like BOOST fall under Ways and Means or the JGO, the JGO Committee especially still had a lot of bills to work on, but they were overloaded with the investigation.

He said part of their job too is to get legislation moving or not moving, but they cannot just put that on the side for other things.

"We're [going to] have to try to work hard and collaboratively and in a good balance. Okay, you want to do the investigation? Fine, but don't forget that we have legislation too that's sitting in the committee," Villagomez said.

He said possibly creating the special committee is needed so everybody is not as stressed.

at the current 83%.

According to Muña, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) informed CHCC that the Biden administration has decided to permanently keep the federal match rate for the CNMI's Medicaid at 83%, meaning the CNMI would only shoulder 17% of Medicaid-related costs.

Essentially, Muña said, the CNMI government would now only have to shoulder 17% of medical costs accrued by the Medicaid program. Previously, the CNMI was shouldering 50% before it was lowered to 45% and the CNMI still could not afford it.

CHCC hopes that the 17% match will prove more affordable for the CNMI as it would come from the Commonwealth's general fund.

LABOR

From page 1

director for Criminal Justice Planning Agency effective immediately.

In a separate memorandum addressed to all department and activity heads, Palacios asked everyone to extend their cooperation to Staffler and Tenorio as they assume their new duties and responsibilities.

Staffler was the running mate of then-representative Christina E. Sablan under the Democratic Party during the November 2022 gubernatorial election.

Last Dec. 29, then-governor Ralph DLG Torres designated Labor Employment Services director Eugene Tebuteb as the acting Labor secretary effective Jan. 1, 2023, after Benavente submitted her courteous resignation.

Last Jan. 5, Torres designated Kaecia Reyes as the acting CIPA director effective the following day.

'Honored and privileged'

During a brief interview with Benavente, she said she was honored to be given the opportunity to serve as DOL secretary for over five years, and to serve alongside the folks who make up the department.

"I'm very honored and privileged to have worked with my fantastic team at the Department of Labor for the last few years. We went through a lot together like the typhoons, the pandemic, and more. It was tough times and yet we still stuck together. I'm just very privileged," she said.

"I'm very grateful for the

opportunity to have helped the community with developing their skills, and the youth also with evaluating their choices when looking for jobs. I'm glad to have been part of all of that," Benavente added.

The former Labor secretary said that she learned a lot and has established long-lasting relationships both within and outside the department.

"I learned a lot. I established a lot of relationships within and out of the department and federal partners and I couldn't have done all of that without the support of my team who worked with me. Even under the worst pressure, they didn't buckle and continued to make sure that we followed the rules. They worked hard, day in and day out," she said.

Her only hope, Benavente said, is that whoever takes over continues the good work she has left behind, which is to further develop the CNMI workforce.

"To whoever takes over, I wish them the best of luck and I hope they continue the work we've been doing to help our workforce," she said.

As for her future endeavors, Benavente said she's looking at pursuing a career in the education system.

"I'm trying to get into education now, possibly the Public School System or at the Northern Marianas College because I would like to utilize my skills to provide more resources to these entities, either through federal grants, or revenue generating programs, and to also help advance the skillsets of our community. I'm still looking and hoping God will put me where I can do the best and I'll go from there," she said. *(With Ferdie de la Torre)*

CHCC

From page 1

Wednesday, Muña shared some good news and some troubling news about the Medical Referral program it previously took over back in 2021.

One of the most troubling pieces of information Muña shared was that the program was only allocated \$1 in the fiscal year 2023 budget, which was passed late last year.

"Just imagine, we got \$1 from as funding for FY 2023. I don't know if you're aware of that. But it was \$1. We stretched that dollar, we've been stretching that dollar for four months since this fiscal year opened, right. We've been [able] to stretch that dollar because of the policies that we enforced

and have reinforced in order for us to cut back on spending. \$1. We've managed to make it run for a while, [but] we need help," she said.

Former representative Christina Sablan confirmed that the Torres administration only appropriated \$1 to the Medical Referral program, but clarified that the \$1 appropriated was to keep the account open so that funds could be reprogrammed later on.

"To give that some context, we appropriated approximately \$1.2 million for CHCC's subsidy in the annual appropriations, with the understanding that the administration had set aside [federal American Rescue Plan Act] money for medical referral as well. The \$1 in the medical referral business unit was to keep the

account open so funds could be reprogrammed at CHCC's discretion. We additionally appropriated another \$1 million for CHCC in the [Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation]," she said.

"Part of the transition of the program is CHCC's increased billing to Medicaid and other insurance providers, along with a review of contracts and other expenditures, so we expected medical referral costs to drop and also better data to assess how much was actually needed in appropriations," Sablan added.

Aside from the startling news shared, Muña also shared that the cost for the program is expected drop for the CNMI, now that the federal match rate for the CNMI's Medicaid program will permanently remain

Lawmakers, Palacios, Apatang discuss state of NMI economy

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) confirmed yesterday that some House and Senate members had a meeting with Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang Wednesday to discuss the state of the CNMI's economy.

In response to Saipan Tribune's inquiry, Villagomez said it was Palacios who called for the meeting, which was held in the Office of the Governor's conference room on Capital Hill. It lasted about one and a half to two hours.

The speaker said not all House and Senate members were present at the meeting.

When asked what significant information Palacios and Apatang shared during their discussions, Villagomez said he would like to give the governor the courtesy to share that information.

Separately, House floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) disclosed in his Facebook account that House and Senate members met with Palacios and Apatang to discuss the state of the Commonwealth's economy.

Propst said he is most grateful to Palacios and Apatang for doing exactly what they promised—opening up the books and showing them where the CNMI is at financially.



Villagomez

"But I am also deeply troubled as to just how bad things are right now. How a former governor could allow this to happen," said the lawmaker, referring to former governor Ralph DLG Torres.

Propst said that out of courtesy, he will allow Palacios and Apatang to give out the figures in their press conference and that he will later comment on it after it is released.

The Palacios-Apatang issued a press release yesterday late afternoon, but did not indicate figures. (See sidebar)

'State of affairs issued once reviews are done'

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang announced yesterday that they will be providing the public with the CNMI government's general state of financial affairs when they have completed a thorough and comprehensive assessment of all financial records, audits, and other relevant documents.

The administration is also currently reviewing all transition reports and financial records that have been prepared

and compiled by the various transition teams assigned to evaluate current government operations.

Palacios emphasized that his administration would like to share the state of the CNMI's finances in a transparent and prompt manner and noted that additional time was needed to ensure the information shared is accurate and correctly depicts the Commonwealth's fiscal state.

"While we work to rebuild

confidence and trust in our government, it's critical that the true representation of our government's fiscal resources is shared with the people," Palacios said.

Preliminary findings indicate that much of the funds from various accounts have been spent and some accounts have negative balances. Nonetheless, additional work is currently being undertaken to reconcile balances and figures from various accounts,

including federally sourced funds like the American Rescue Plan Act.

At the same time, the administration is actively exploring the need for short and long-term cost-cutting measures to ensure the sustainability of essential government programs and services.

More information about these measures will be shared as the administration gains a more accurate picture of its finances and provides a realistic plan for fiscal and economic recovery. (PR)

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP23-CHCC/ELC-EDE-005
EPIDEMIOLOGY AND LABORATORY CAPACITY (ELC) PROGRAM
— ENHANCING DETECTION EXPANSION (EDE)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 16TH, 2023 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"LABORATORY RENOVATION / IMPROVEMENT PROJECT"
(Coordinate, Design, Oversight Monitoring and Construction)
for CHC Hospital /Public Health Laboratory Department

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE (WWW.CHCC.HEALTH). ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL. IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP • 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500 / 1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMI-PORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN SERVICES

TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
TWO EQUIPMENT STORAGE/RENTAL WAREHOUSE BUILDINGS
PROJECT NO. CPA-TA-001-23

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design Services for the construction of two (2) equipment storage/rental warehouse buildings at the Tinian International Airport, Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-TA-001-23.

The project is being funded by CPA and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the proposal package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, local time, Friday, January 27, 2023.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2023**. Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: January 4, 2023

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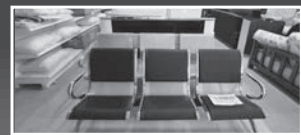
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Nominations are now being accepted for MCS awards

In anticipation of Mount Carmel School's "Night with the Knights" gala on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, Mount Carmel School is accepting nominations for the special awards that will be announced during the event. This year's event is special as it is dedicated to also celebrating 70 years of the school's commitment to faith, service, tradition, and excellence.

The "Night with the Knights" is the AlumKnight Association's annual event aimed to help raise funds for Mount Carmel School. Additionally, the "Night with the Knights" is part of Mount Carmel School's Catholic Schools Week celebration dedicated to "Celebrating Our Alumni."

Since 1998, Mount Carmel School has granted special awards to individuals and AlumKnights who have distinguished themselves as leaders in business, government, and the community and who represent the school's trademark values of faith, excellence, and success. The 2022 AlumKnight of the Year will be recognized, along with the AlumKnight Class of

the Year, Parent of the Year, Legacy Teacher of the Year, and the Millennial Falcon of the Year at the annual "Night with the Knights" fundraising banquet. This event is also the final event of the school's Catholic Schools Week celebration.

All members of the community are invited to submit nominations for the awards mentioned. The school's selection panel will review nominations and select the awardees. The deadline for nominations is Friday, Jan. 20,

2023. Nomination guidelines are available at <https://www.mountcarmelsaipan.com/a-night-with-the-knights>. Nom-

School president Frances T. Taimanao said the "Night with the Knights" is a special occasion where the school has the opportunity to gather and recognize the great works of its AlumKnights.

1990 AlumKnight and association member John S. Blanco added, "While the event celebrates AlumKnights, we invite all community members to celebrate with us. Individuals who have attended Mount Carmel School, but did not graduate are still Knights.

As our saying goes, 'Once a Knight, always a Knight.'"

Tickets for "Night with the Knights" are \$70 per person. AlumKnights interested in purchasing a table for their class and family can contact Blanco at businessmanager@mcsknights.com.

Tickets are available at the school's Business Office and can also be purchased through any Mount Carmel School employee. Cash and PayPal payments are accepted. For more information, visit <https://www.mountcarmelsaipan.com/a-night-with-the-knights>. (MCS)

AWARDS UP FOR GRABS

- 2022 AlumKnight of the Year
- AlumKnight Class of the Year
- Parent of the Year
- Legacy Teacher of the Year
- Millennial Falcon of the Year

ination submissions can be submitted at the Mount Carmel School business office or emailed to businessmanager@mcsknights.com.

AlumKnights encouraged to gather their classes for 'Night with the Knights' gala

"Night with the Knights" is part of Mount Carmel School's Catholic Schools Week celebration dedicated to "Celebrating Our Alumni."

Throughout the school's history, Mount Carmel School has served and graduated students who have grown together in their young adult lives. Due to small class sizes and rich student engagement, many AlumKnights have continued to maintain close relationships with their peers after

graduation. For this reason, the MCS AlumKnight Association highly encourages AlumKnights to gather their peers to help celebrate the school's seventy years of family, community, and memories.

2013 AlumKnight and association member Victoria Deleon Guerrero shared the relationships and memories made at Mount Carmel School continue to thrive even after graduation.

"To this day, my classmates and all the friends I've made at MCS remain near and dear to my heart. Even if we don't see each other for months or years, the love and respect are always there and that's what we're celebrating at the Night with the Knights. The family and memories we created during our time at MCS," she said.

The event will be on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, at the Saipan World Resort Taga Ballroom from 6pm to 10pm.

Tickets for "Night with the Knights" are \$70 per person. AlumKnights interested in purchasing a table for their class and family can contact John Blanco at businessmanager@mcsknights.com.

Tickets are available at the school's Business Office and can also be purchased through any Mount Carmel School employee. Cash and PayPal payments are accepted. For more information, visit <https://www.mountcarmelsaipan.com/a-night-with-the-knights>. (MCS)

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

INVITATION TO BID
DPW23-ITB NO. 42300036

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 03, 2023 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"Commercial office space for the Secretary's office, Division of Building Safety Code and Division of Technical Services of the Department of Public Works"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT HORGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE ACTING SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS, ANTHONY A. CAMACHO AT (670) 234-9828

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ANTHONY A. CAMACHO
ACTING SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR, P.S.

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**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW23-ITB NO.: 42300029

SUBMISSION DATE: February 15, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Flore Rosa St. Road and Drainage Improvement Project"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **January 13, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **February 02, 2023**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **February 09, 2023** to **Mr. George C. Sablan, Acting Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ MICHAEL A. BORJA
ACTING SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW23-ITB NO.: 42300028

SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Route 302 (Naftan Road) Improvement, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **January 06, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **January 25, 2023**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **February 03, 2023** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ MICHAEL A. BORJA
ACTING SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

**: FCD-GU CIVIL
ACTION
JENNALYN : NO. 22-0341
B. DE LEON**

**Petitioner, : ORDER
vs. : SHORTENING
Respondent, : TIME AND
: NOTICE OF
: HEARING**

GOOD CAUSE APPEARING, it is hereby ordered that the time for notice of hearing for Petitioner/Respondent's petition be shortened and that the hearing be set on January 23, 2023, at 9 a.m. in Courtroom.

Dated this 11th day of January, 2023.

/s/
Judge

US, Palau ink MOU related to Compact accord negotiations

WEATHER ADVISORIES

Public warned of dangerous surf conditions

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6pm Sunday along north and east facing reefs of Saipan and Tinian. There is also a high risk of rip currents through Sunday afternoon along north and east facing reefs. On Rota, a high surf advisory is in effect until 6pm Sunday along north facing reefs.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, large breaking waves and dangerous rip currents will be present on Saipan and Tinian through at least 6pm Sunday.

These will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

There is a high risk of rip currents on Rota through Sunday afternoon along north and east facing reefs. Large breaking waves and dangerous rip currents will be present on Rota until at least 6pm Sunday. This means dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Surf will build further along east facing reefs on Friday. The high surf advisory may be extended to east facing reefs. Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions.

Residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are urged to stay out of the water along north and east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. (PR/SaipanTribune)

Public warned against boating

A small craft advisory remains in effect until 6pm Sunday. This means that wind speeds of 20 to 25 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, east winds of 20 to 25 knots, with gusts of up to 35 knots and seas between 10 and 15 feet are present in Saipan and Tinian coastal waters until 6pm Sunday. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft. Individual maximum wave heights may exceed 25 feet.

On Rota, a small craft advisory in effect until 6pm Sunday. Seas of 8 to 12 feet and east winds of 10 to 20 knots, with gusts up to 30 knots, are present in Rota coastal waters until 6pm Sunday. Individual maximum wave heights may reach 20 feet.

Conditions will be hazardous to small craft. Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in hazardous conditions. (PR/Saipan Tribune)

The governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Palau signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding affirming their close and continuing partnership and reflecting their consensus reached on levels and kinds of future U.S. assistance to be requested for Palau's

economic development.

Special presidential envoy for Compact negotiations Joseph Yun signed the memorandum for the United States and Minister of Finance Kaleb Udui, Jr. signed for the Republic of Palau.

President Surangel Whipps, Jr. of the Republic of Palau,

Senator Rukebai Kikuo Inabo and Delegate Mengkur Rechelulk from Palau's Congress, Ambassador Hersey Kyota of the Republic of Palau, and Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor, U.S. Department of the Interior attended the signing in Los Angeles.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed as part of ongoing Compact-related negotiations and confirms our shared vision for a strengthened and lasting partnership that will continue to benefit both nations and the entire Pacific region. (State Department)

JKPL closed Tuesday in lieu of MLK Day holiday

The Joeten-Kiyu Public Library will be closed on Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023, in lieu of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday on Monday, Jan. 16, 2023. We will take this time to recognize and honor the memory and message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a true hero and leader in the

social justice movement for equality. Wishing everyone an enjoyable and inspiring Martin Luther King Jr. Day!

Take this time to visit your public library's free resources by visiting www.cnmilib.org to search for books available at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library's online card catalog or

check out e-books at Baker and Taylor Axis 360.

MLKJ Day Book recommendations

Children: Martin & Mahalia: his words, her song by Andrea Davis Pinkney (available at the Children's Library at the JKPL)

Children: Memphis, Mar-

tin, and the Mountaintop: The Sanitation Strike of 1968 by Alice Faye Duncan

Teens: Kindred by Octavia E. Butler (available on e-book Baker & Taylor Axis 360)

Adults: The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr. by Coretta Scott King (available at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library) (PR)

SSHS Manta Ray Battalion Color Guard performs for the inauguration ceremony

The Saipan Southern High School's Manta Ray Battalion color guard assisted at the inauguration ceremony for the swearing in of the new Saipan mayor, Ramon "RB" Camacho, last Monday, Jan. 9, 2023.

The color guard introduced and presented the CNMI and American flags for the playing of the national anthems for the ceremony, which took place from 7am to 10am at the



building in front of the Saipan Mayor's Office.

During the singing of the Star Spangled Banner, the CNMI flag was lower than the U.S. flag. The CNMI flag was then leveled with the U.S. flag

once they sang the CNMI national anthem. When that was done, the color guard marched and posted the colors, waiting until called upon to retire the colors to signal the end of the ceremony. (PR)

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Power 99 donates \$5K worth of advertising support to NMC

As part of its efforts to help the Northern Marianas College promote its upcoming golf tournament in March, radio station Power 99 recently donated \$5,000 worth of radio advertisements to help market the event.

"Power 99 is proud to support the NMC golf tournament once again," Power 99 general manager Tina B. Palacios said. "Our radio station has always been a supporter of the college and its mission to provide quality higher education to the CNMI community."

For the first time, NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and will be held on March 18 and 19, 2023, on the

east and west courses of the LaoLao Bay Golf and Resort. The tournament fee for the 2023 golf open is \$250.

"NMC is grateful to Power 99 for helping us promote the CNMI's premier golf tournament," NMC Foundation board chair Ben Babauta said.

The tournament, which is the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds for the college for its rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Despite the devastation and destruction of Super Typhoon Soudelor and Yutu, the college has been aggressively seeking funds from all available sources to rebuild

classrooms, offices, labs, and workforce spaces for the CNMI community. The college is seeking the CNMI private sector's support through fundraising events like the golf tournament.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the college with its rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting NMC Foundation coordinator Carla Sablan at carla.sablan@marianas.edu or (670) 237-6780.

Golfers who would like to register for the upcoming tour-

namment can also visit www.marianas.edu/golf. Only online payments are accepted for

this upcoming golf open.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College

on Facebook and Instagram ([nmc.proa](https://www.facebook.com/nmc.proa)) or visit www.marianas.edu. (NMC)

Sherwin-Williams Saipan is latest ProaPerks partner



Sherwin-Williams Saipan is the latest company to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks partner, joining many other businesses and organizations. More information about their special promotion for ProaPerks card holders can be found at www.marianas.edu/proaperks.

Paint store Sherwin-Williams Saipan is the latest to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks partner, joining many other businesses and organizations. All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive a 30% discount on every purchase at Sherwin-Williams Saipan, and can get \$10 off of every pail of Lexis Silicone Roof Coating (only valid if four or more pails are purchased.)

Sherwin-Williams Saipan is located on Middle Road,

across Springs Plaza. They can be reached by calling (670) 234-1717.

Sherwin-Williams Saipan joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners, such as 153 Restaurant, 360 Restaurant, 4EVER CNMI, Alamo Car Rental, AllStar Sporting Goods, Aqua Connections, Inc., AQUASMITH, Athlete's Foot, Avis Rent A Car, BAB Korean Restaurant Cup Bab, Beach Garden Hotel & Apartment, Bistro Marianas, Capital Hotel, Chagi Norf Kitchen, Boarderline, Bolis R US 2, Candle J, Caravan of Food, Casa Decor, Casa Urashima, Chelu Alynez Enterprise, Chungi Wa Korean Restaurant, Clear Water Place, Clear Water Residence, Clear Water Villa, Coral Garden Hotel, Cosmos Lounge, D' Chef's Kitchen, Docomo Pacific, Dollar Days, Enterprise Car Rental, Ete Cafe, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods, Flame Angel, Fork and Spoon, Furusato Restaurant, Garapan Restaurant Cafe & Grill, Gold's Gym, Great Harvest, Boyer Trading Company LLC, dba Ginen Saipan, Hafa Adai Rent A Car, Hardt Eye Clinic, Inc., Healing Stones Spa, Highway Express Auto Care Center, Herman's Modern Bakery, Inc., Hertz Rental Car, Hyatt, Hotel Americano, Ina's Kitchen, International Roller Skates, Isla Shave Ice, Islander Rent A Car, Java Joe's, JC Cafe, Jhen's Sweet

Corner Cakes, Judy's Cafe & Restaurant, Kentucky Fried Chicken/Taco Bell, Kiki's, Korea House Restaurant, Latte Built Gym, Lohas Massage, Lohas Nails, Lucky Store, Lucky II Mart, Magbers Snack Bar, Majesty Restaurant, Mariana Lighthouse, Marianas Creation, MMC & Pacific Labs, LLC, Megabyte, Mermaid Restaurant & Milk tea, Namaste Beautiful Salon & Spa, Nam Dae Moon, National Car Rental, Natural Nail & Spa, Neni Girl Nails, NMC Bookstore, Ocean Star Restaurant, Pacific Home Appliances, Paradise Dental Spa, Paradiso Resort & Spa, Pena House Pizzeria Bar & Grill, Pokiyaki, Residence Lodge, Saipan Computer Services, Salt & Barber Salon, Shirley's Cafe, Spicy Thai Noodle, Salty's, Stay Cafe, Summit Auto Repair Shop, Surf Club, Residence Lodge, Tempura's Best Restaurant, The Hut, The Ohala Foundation Clothing, The Pacific Supply, The Shack, Time Creation Corp., Tinian Diamond Hotel, Tom Yum Restaurant, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include NMC alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. (NMC)



Power 99 recently donated \$5,000 worth of radio advertisements to the Northern Marianas College to help market its upcoming Golf Open in March. In photo from left is Power 99 DJ Dizzy, account manager Norlyn Cabrera, and Power 99 DJs Burn and Bradda J.

NMC



DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 | Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
Tel. No. 664-8300 FAX NO. 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp



NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of January 13, 2022

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. U.S.A. Farner Corporation, Ltd.	08/05/2022 CRM-MS2022-0003	Cement Batching Plant & Hollow Block Facility	Kannat Tabla, Saipan	Major Siting	Final Determination 01/19/2023
2. Joaquina Agulto	11/14/2022 APC2022-0002	Construction of a Single Story, 2-Bedroom Residential House	Chalan Kanoa, Saipan	Wetlands & Mangroves	Under Review*
3. Department of Public Works (DPW)	11/17/2022 CRM-MS2022-0002	Kagman Transfer Station Facility	Kagman, Saipan	Major Siting	Public Hearing 1/17/2023
4. Office of Grants Management & State Clearinghouse (OGM)	12/19/2022 APC2022-0015	Construction of Four Concrete Pavilions and Installation of Solar Panels	San Antonio, Saipan	Shoreline	Approved* 1/6/2023
5. Mariana Sports Club, Inc. MSC	12/21/2022 APC2022-0014	SCUBA Diving Tour/Operation	All Designated Dive Sites, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Approved* 1/4/2023
6. Saipan Crewboats, Inc	12/27/2022 CRM-MD2022-0004	Dry-Dock C/B Carolinian	Lower Base, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 1/10/2023
7. Let's Go Tour Company dba Sea-Touch	12/28/2022 APC2022-0016	Sandbar Tours	Garapan, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Under Review*
8. Sakura CNMI Corporation dba Sakura Marine Sports	12/29/2022 CRM-MD2022-0005	Temporary Beach Concession	Garapan, Saipan	Shoreline	On Hold*
9. Pacific Subsea Saipan, Inc.	01/05/2023 APC2023-0018	Dry-Dock M/V Serenita	Lower Base, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 1/10/2023
10. Public School System (PSS). Athletics Programs	01/09/2023 CRM-MD2023-0006	PSS Interscholastic Outrigger Canoe Race	Oleai, Saipan	Minor Development	Under Review*
11. Westlake Motor, LLC	01/10/2023 APC2023-0019	Westlake Motor, LLC Rental Car Facility	San Roque, Saipan	Wetlands & Mangroves	Under Review*

NMIAC § 15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

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USCG, FSM collaborate under expanded bilateral agreement

KOLONIA, Federated States of Micronesia—Members of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam and the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District conducted meetings and a tabletop exercise in Pohnpei the week of Dec. 12 around the use of the expanded bilateral agreement in support of maritime law enforcement operations recently signed between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States in October, before successfully executing boardings under the agreement Dec. 17.

"We are so pleased to be strengthening our trust and partnership with our colleagues in the Federated States of Micronesia to overcome complex challenges to maritime enforcement in the region," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. "FSM is a nation with over six hundred islands, and covering that area with available patrol vessels is a challenge. We frequently patrol the region with our Fast Response Cutters from Guam. Still, it can be quite a logistical undertaking to get an FSM marine police officer from Pohnpei aboard a patrol vessel in time to respond to a possible illegal fishing situation, particularly farther out in Yap or Kosrae states."

The purpose of the tabletop exercise was to walk through the process of using the standard operating procedures under the expanded agreement. The team met with local government members, including the judicial and law enforcement branches. Then on Dec. 17, the crew of the USCGC *Frederick Hatch*, after departing Kosrae, successfully conducted two boardings on licensed fishing vessels operating in the FSM exclusive economic zone with FSM's approval.

"It was very fulfilling to have an opportunity to enact the procedures under the expanded agreement for the first time after watching the program develop over the last year," said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, USCGC *Frederick Hatch* commanding officer. "It provides the U.S. Coast Guard with another avenue to support our regional partners and continues to lay the groundwork for increasing Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing enforcement in the region."

The expanded agreement builds on the existing bilateral shiprider agreement between the two countries. It establishes procedures for authorizing the U.S. to conduct maritime law enforcement boardings on behalf of FSM to combat illicit maritime activity when an FSM law enforcement officer is not present. More specifically, the agreement provides a coordinating mechanism and



U.S. Coast Guard and FSM Maritime Wing members conduct a tabletop exercise to test the mechanics of using the enhanced shiprider agreement in Pohnpei, FSM, Dec. 12-15, 2022.

process for U.S. law enforcement personnel to work with the FSM National Police, Division of Border Control and Maritime Surveillance to receive approval from the FSM to act under the agreement.

The U.S. Coast Guard regularly exercises 11 bilateral fisheries law enforcement agreements on behalf of the United States with countries throughout the Pacific islands. Shiprider agreements allow maritime law enforcement officers to observe, board, and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within a designated EEZ or on the high seas. These law enforcement activities bolster maritime law enforcement operations and maritime domain awareness and provide a mechanism to conduct integrated operations within the Pacific. This expanded agreement is the first of its kind.

"We're excited to launch the expanded maritime enforcement operations, which will strengthen FSM sovereignty and protect vital marine resources," said Alissa Bibb, chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Kolonia.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains strong partnerships with the maritime forces in the region through extensive training and subject matter expert exchanges. FSM, also known as the Big Ocean State, has one of the world's largest EEZs, with waters rich in sea life. FSM consists of four states—Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae—each with a mix of unique peoples, languages, and cultures. FSM is a signatory to a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They are also a Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association member and a party to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

several years an FSM shiprider could accompany U.S. Coast Guard crews as the country resumes normal operations after limiting travel as a COVID precaution. The shiprider returned to Pohnpei before the cutter crew departed for RMI and Nauru, where the team went on to conduct boardings with shipriders from those countries.

"This was an excellent warm-up of our bilateral relations and fisheries enforcement process. It was great to have local experts with us again, refresh everyone's memory, and provide services to our FSM partners," Simmons said. "The successful application of the expanded agreement now allows us to support our partners better. FSM occupies more than one million square miles of the Pacific Ocean and ranges 1,700 miles from West (Yap) to East (Kosrae) with the enforcement team in Pohnpei. This agreement allows us to help our partners overcome the logistics that limited enforcement in the past when it is difficult to get a shiprider out to the field."

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam crews conducted regular patrols in FSM's EEZ during COVID and provided sighting reports but could not board

vessels in the EEZ without an FSM shiprider along. The *Frederick Hatch* crew was in Pohnpei in early 2022 for a no-contact replenishment while on patrol in the EEZ. The USCGC *Oliver Henry* crew kicked off Operation Rematau in October with a nearly 2,000 nautical mile deployment to the high seas and the Federated States of Micronesia, countering illegal fishing through their presence and strengthening partnerships through community engagements.

Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast Guard endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It recognizes the wisdom of the Pacific Island Forum leaders in that securing the future requires long-term vision and a carefully considered regional strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Op Rematau reinforces U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S. national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime governance and security. (USCG)



El D. Cabrera
Administrator

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

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Richard V. Salas
Director, DCRM

MEETING OF THE CRM AGENCY OFFICIALS

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang through the Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) hereby give notice that a CRM Agency Officials meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 10:00AM** at the DCRM Learning Center, Suite 301, Gualo Rai Center II, on Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.

To minimize the threat of COVID-19 and to ensure the health and safety of all, virtual public participation will continue and encouraged via video conferencing through Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j> (Meeting ID: 6706648315) or join via telephone by calling the DCRM office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance and most updated information as Zoom meeting access code may change.

AGENDA

- I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
 - A. Call to Order
 - B. Roll Call
 - C. Adoption of Agenda
 - D. Adoption of December 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes
- II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- III. PERMIT APPLICATION REVIEW
 - 1) CRM Permit Application No. CRM-MS2022-0003 (formerly SMS-2012-X-061-A1)
Project: KANNAT TABLA QUARRY OPERATIONS EXTENSION AND NEW CEMENT BATCHING PLANT AND HOLLOW BLOCK MANUFACTURING FACILITY
Applicant: USA FANTER CORPORATION LIMITED
USA Fanter Corporation Limited is proposing to extend its quarry operations to April 30, 2027 and to construct a new cement batching plant and hollow block manufacturing facility on its public land property identified as Lot Nos. 040 H 12 and 040 H 13 in Kannat Tabla, Saipan.
 - a. Agencies' Discussion
 - b. Agencies' Final Determination
 - 2) CRM Permit Application No. CRM-MS2022-0002 (Amendment to SMS-00-X-129)
Project: CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW KAGMAN TRANSFER STATION
Applicant: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
The Department of Public Works (DPW) is proposing to construct and operate a new solid waste transfer station along Gabgab Road in Kagman, Saipan. The new Kagman Transfer Station includes road improvements of the existing Gabgab Road that leads to the transfer station and is designed to function as a community convenience center for residents to dispose their household solid waste.
 - c. Agencies' Discussion
 - d. Agencies' Final Determination
- IV. OTHER MATTERS
- V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and submit written or oral testimony regarding the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session).

/s/ RICHARD V. SALAS
Director, DCRM



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- Must be dependable and flexible

Applications are available at the Main Office located on Airport Road, situated between American Red Cross and Historic Preservation Office, or send resume to rita.taitano@lsgskycheffs.com.
Deadline for submission is Tuesday, January 31, 2023.

Opinion

Hafa Adai! Saipan Tribune

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AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Brazil's version of Jan. 6 was driven by some of the same MAGA instigators

The defeated president had spent months falsely crying election fraud. His allies in right-wing media relentlessly spread conspiracy theories, hammering at the nation's confidence in its own democracy. It came to a head one day in early January, as thousands of the president's supporters stormed the seat of government, trampling police, breaking windows and doors and parading triumphantly through the halls of the Capitol.

The violent mob attack in Brazil's capital city on Sunday wasn't merely a coincidental echo of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection in the U.S. Capitol. In real ways, it was inspired by the U.S. attack, patterned after it and even instigated with the help of some of the same Donald Trump allies who helped light the fuse here.

Exactly two years and two days after Trump and his mob attempted to prevent the peaceful transfer of power in Washington, thousands of Brazilian protesters loyal to defeated ex-President Jair Bolsonaro attacked Brazil's Congress and other government buildings. The rioters wrought extensive damage. Hundreds were arrested.

Unlike Trump, Bolsonaro had already left office (and the country) before the attack. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who defeated Bolsonaro in the Oct. 30 election, was sworn in Jan. 1. But the attackers, like their American counterparts, were intent on using violence to reverse the election.

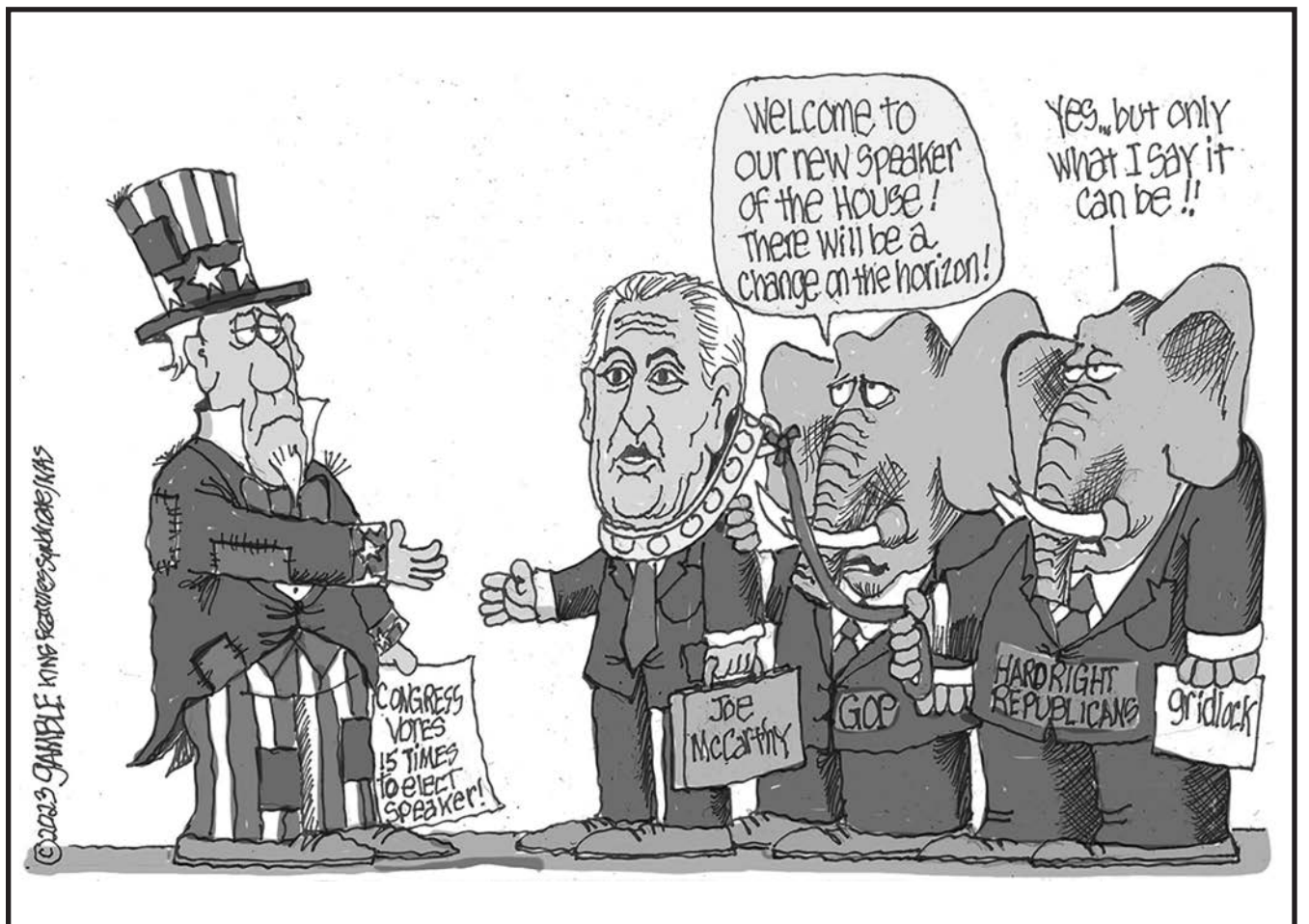
Other parallels abound. Trump, long a fan of autocrats and fellow autocrat-wannabes, was a supporter of Bolsonaro, a right-winger known for anti-democratic rhetoric. Bolsonaro spent months before the election telling his supporters that any outcome other than his reelection would be fraudulent, a play right out of Trump's playbook. Bolsonaro, like Trump, refused to attend his successor's inauguration, further entrenching his followers in their refusal to accept the election results.

The effort to destabilize Brazil's democracy didn't just mirror Jan. 6; it was driven by the same poisonous populism—and even some of the same people. Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon used social media to spread false conspiracy theories about fraud in Brazil's election, just as he did regarding the U.S. election before the insurrection. Ali Alexander, another Trumpist who helped spur the insurrection, called on the Brazilian mob to “Do whatever is necessary!” to put Bolsonaro back in power—followed by a sick quip supporting “impromptu Capitol tours.”

“Dear Brazil, please watch those vote counts at 3 a.m.,” Mark Finchem, the Trumpist election denier who would later lose the race for Arizona secretary of state, said on social media in early October.

Trump himself has been notably silent about Brazil's riot—just as he was damnably silent through most of the violence of the Jan. 6 insurrection. But the message should be clear anyway: that Trump's toxic brand of American would-be autocracy is now apparently being exported to other, more wobbly democracies is all the more reason to finally purge it from politics here.

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Found in translation

My late-friend, Jimmy (aka: Big Tuna), and I would often reflect through laughter on how funny some literal translations between Chuukese and English can be, particularly when trying to convey common sayings or terminology considered to hold deep, heartfelt meaning. We took some pride in knowing that the Chuukese (including us outer islanders) tend to reach for far deeper meaning, if not inspiration, with every word. If words were an indigenous dish, a clever turn of a phrase, hopeless metaphors and a pinch of “*ëkkene*” would be our main ingredients. My brother, Luc, likes the analogy of warrior poets for us. I prefer Cheezebags with our “love language” being ChuukCheeze™ as we’ve come to call it.

It is important to remember, though, that language is inextricably linked with culture, so misinterpretation of language can very easily result in cultural offense. Some people take offense to things much easier than others, of course, and likely view language barriers purely in the negative—without a doubt, miscommunication (or the lack of effective communication) is a leading cause of missed opportunities and failed relationships of all kinds and at every level. It’s hard enough trying to communicate properly with people in shared languages, but it’s even harder trying to connect through varying languages. That said and putting aside the brittle spirits of so many who won’t see past themselves, those who seek out and choose to wallow in so-called offenses, there is a level of hilarity that can be found in translation from one language to another (even or especially when intended meaning gets lost).

After mandatory Latin class in middle school, I decided (upon entering high school) that I would take the option of French for my language class requirement. My reasoning—and this is the honest goodness truth—was *Pepè Le Pew* (that’s right, the flirtatious cartoon skunk from Looney Tunes). At that moment in time, I found him hilarious and frankly he made me want to learn more about the so-called, “language of love.” One writer suggests that, “The melodic rhythm of the French language is enough to melt hearts all over the world,” which is why it is known as the language of love and romance. Even non-romantic words—like “*libellule*,” which literally means “dragonfly”—can cause a flutter in the heart.” (<https://journeytofrance.com/why-is-french-the-language-of-love/>) As a 15-year-old, pubescent boy I thought that was important—I suppose due to and through the exaggerated, French accent of *Pepè* himself who says, “In the spring, a young man’s love lightly turns to thoughts of fancy.”

I would learn, of course, that context matters and, although lovable in a quirky, acquired-taste kind of way, skunk-cheese is not for everyone, much less when served up at the hands of

MY GLASS CUP

By JIM RAYPHAND

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jim Rayphand is a former executive director of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc. and recently ventured into a startup fishing business.



a silly little boy. Coincidentally and as luck would have it, the relationship with my first “real girlfriend” would take root and blossom in French class (before it withered away in the cold hard nights of winter). *C’est la vie*.

Through the Mandt System®, a behavioral crisis interaction training, I learned of “Albert Mehrabian, a researcher of body language, who was the first to break down the components of a face-to-face conversation and found that communication is 55% nonverbal, 38% vocal and 7% words only.” MANDT puts it even more concisely in saying that it’s 55% Body Language, 38% Tone of Voice and only 7% Words. Imagine that: Our words make up a mere 7% of what we communicate and how that communication is received. I suspect these percentages may fluctuate from person to person, but there’s no escaping the fact that body language and tone of voice take on far more significance than the actual words being said (explaining, if not affirming, why and how so much gets lost in translation). Just to state the obvious, there is no body language or tone of voice in texting, emailing, etc. You are either sending or receiving a mere 7% of the whole message with texts and what’s worse is your mind likely invents or imagines the tone of voice and body language to go with it—whether in a negative or positive mood will determine how that person sounds and looks in your mind. This, by the way, borders on torturous for a person who prefers writing over speaking his words.

According to MANDT again, in order for people to feel safe with you, “there must be consistency between the words we use, the tone of our voice and our body language”—the more consistent they are, the more understood and believable a person becomes. Practically nothing breaks down communication more succinctly than distrust, or worse, not feeling safe around people. Conversely there is hardly anything that fosters more honest communication beyond people being able to say, “In this place, and with these people, I am safe.”™

I was confused to read recently that *Pepè Le Pew* (for emphasis)

See RAYPHAND on Page 11

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

GCEA MSP Christmas Decorating Contest brought out the holiday spirit in schools



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Oleai Elementary School wins first place in the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' second Christmas Decorating Contest.

TOGETHER, WE CAN By GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS

Special to the Saipan Tribune

The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers had the pleasure of welcoming new and returning participants to its second Christmas Decorating Contest in December 2022. As part of the GCEA Marianas School Pride Campaign, which aims to encourage students to take pride in their campuses through beautification activities, this year's contest was extra special as we encouraged CNMI schools to decorate their entrances to make their campuses festive for the holidays.

GCEA was pleased to welcome back three returning contestants and seven new contestants. All 10 schools competed for a chance to win an education tax credit for their schools and recognition as the most festive campus. They spruced up their grounds and a majority of them were decorated with repurposed and handmade elements!

With that said, the GCEA is proud to announce the top three winners of this year's GCEA MSP Christmas Decorating Contest!

- First place: Oleai Elementary School
- Second place: Chacha Ocean View Middle School
- Third place: Kagman Elementary School

Oleai Elementary School won \$1,000, Chacha Ocean View Middle School won \$500, and Kagman Elementary School won \$300. The ETC awards will be donated to the winning schools after the awards ceremony in May 2023. All three schools are located on Saipan.

Each school will receive points for participation, which will be applied to their overall score at the end of the year. Much like the GCEA Marianas Village Pride Campaign, schools will be competing for points that will decide the grand prize winner of \$10,000 in ETC!

We welcome everyone to view the photos of all the contest entries on GCEA's Facebook page (@cnmigov.economy).

Sponsorships opportunities available

To successfully run the activities and contests for Marianas' School Pride program, the GCEA is inviting local businesses to help sponsor the campaign. GCEA gratefully accepts various forms of sponsorship, such as donations of education tax credits, support for the production of village flags, in-kind services and supplies for MSP programs, advertising sponsorships, and contest prizes.

All ETC donations are given directly to the schools, where the money is used for improvements or to purchase much-needed supplies and equipment.

The GCEA thanks all public and private schools that participated in the second GCEA Christmas Decorating Contest. They committed to making their campuses more festive during the holidays and were able to clean up their campuses and provide festive displays that the community enjoyed. Together, We Can!



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Chacha Ocean View Middle School wins second place in the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' second Christmas Decorating Contest.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kagman Elementary School wins third place in the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' second Christmas Decorating Contest.

For more information visit the GCEA website at cnmieconomy.com. Engage with the Council on Facebook and Instagram (@cnmigov.economy) or contact them at gceacnmi@gmail.com.

RAYPHAND

From page 10

sis the cartoon skunk from Looney Tunes) became the target of a "cancel culture" snowball of snowflakes—reportedly cut (though unconfirmed) from appearing in one of the Space Jam movies—because he "normalized rape culture," according to some op-ed published in the NY Times. I want to weep






for the future.

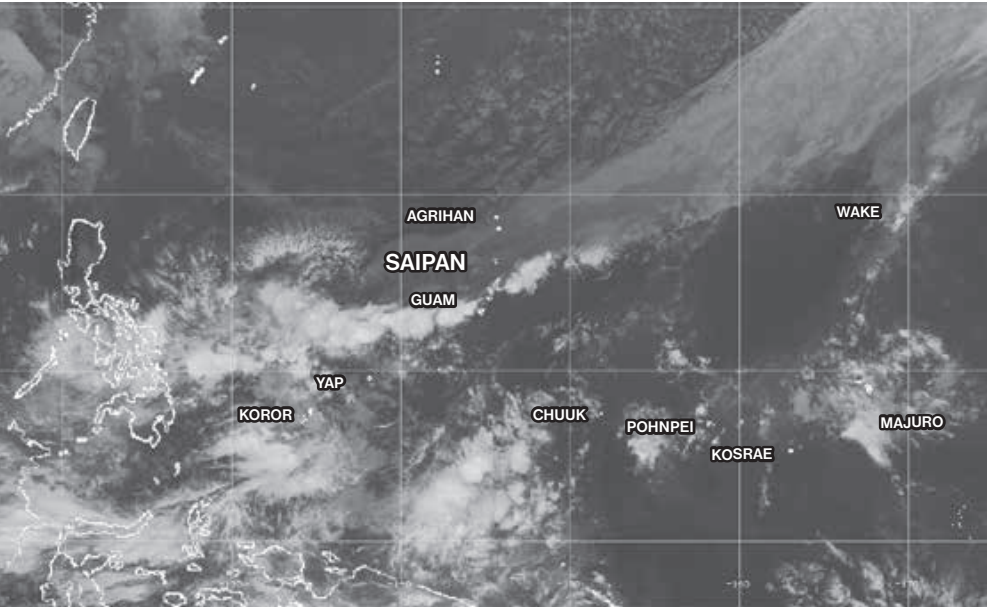
To each his own, of course, but what I remember is a lovable cartoon skunk that was hopelessly in love with a cartoon cat that (like everyone else besides other skunks, I presume) couldn't stand his stench—pretty freakin' funny if you ask me.

For the sake of over-thinking, there is a level of familiarity with Pepè's playful language such as, "*C'est le moment de la mise amore*" which apparently was a play on the words "*mise à mort*" (death sentence) and "*mi amore*" (love in Italian). The

clever use of subtle, double meaning and the imagery of death and love in unison (or rather, the sentiment of give me love or give me death) is the stuff of good ChuukCheeze. And if you haven't had your daily dose of cheese today, "*Kapong seni ei mes-en mongki ngeni ka pwisin sinei. Choun ei inis ekuf ren choun fongum ei merei.*" [Translation: Greetings from this monkey face to you already know. The heavy weight of this body is no match for the heavy weight of this love I have for you.] (Note to reader: Smile.)

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
									
Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm. Mostly cloudy		Scattered showers. Mostly cloudy		A 40 percent chance of showers. Mostly cloudy		A chance of showers. Partly sunny		Mostly sunny	
80°	77°	84°	77°	84°	77°	84°	77°	86°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 8:38 AM, THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate trade winds across Guam build to strong levels at Saipan as a shear line sits overhead. Radar shows clusters of showers sweeping through with modest reflectivities (light to moderate rain) at this time. Combined seas are 8 to 12 feet with the highest heights anchored over Saipan and Tinian waters.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	82° / 77°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	82° / 76°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	83° / 78°	
Chuuk	Isolated Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Isolated Thunderstorms	86° / 77°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:45 AM	6:04 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:05 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:05 PM
Monday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM
Tuesday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	10:52 AM	11:09 PM
Saturday	-	11:27 AM	11:58 PM
Sunday	-	12:03 PM	-
Monday	12:49 AM	12:42 PM	-
Tuesday	1:43 AM	1:26 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	69° / 62°	
Beijing	Showers	46° / 25°	
Hong Kong	Showers	72° / 68°	
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	78° / 65°	
London	Partly Cloudy	50° / 42°	
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	70° / 50°	
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 75°	
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	78° / 64°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	78° / 65°	
New York	Showers	52° / 50°	
Osaka	Showers	64° / 55°	
Paris	Partly Cloudy	52° / 44°	
Busan	Rain/Wind	63° / 53°	
Rome	Cloudy	58° / 43°	
Salem	Thunderstorms	72° / 40°	
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	63° / 53°	
Seoul	Rain	51° / 43°	
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	58° / 51°	
Washington, DC	Isolated Thunderstorms	54° / 45°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
05:20 AM	Low Tide	0.05	
12:18 PM	High Tide	1.63	
6:40 PM	Low Tide	0.77	
11:24 PM	High Tide	1.24	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2023							
DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3, 6 via Incheon	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
				OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7	OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. (The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS					
INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022					
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			TINIAN TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)	7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.		10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)	4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)
SAIPAN TO ROTA			ROTA TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.		9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.		2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	
SAIPAN TO GUAM			GUAM TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.		12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.		6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.							
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022							
SAIPAN TO ROTA				ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily	3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri	3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun	3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily	3103	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM				GUAM TO ROTA			
LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri	4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily	2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily	2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily	2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily	2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily	2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

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Business

The Hut spreads its wings in new location

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Hut has completed its metamorphosis from literally a hole-in-the-wall largely take-out operation next to R&J Wine, Liquor, and Tobacco to a full-fledged restaurant at the Rita's Building in Garapan.

Co-owner Tom Deleon Guerrero said The Hut made the move to the new location in October of 2022 and after nearly two months of renovation, opened up its new digs at the old IHOP restaurant that now allows it to comfortably seat as many as 50 customers, host parties, expand its already impressive Mexican food menu, as well as finally sell drinks.

He said the move to a bigger and obviously costlier place is a risk to him and his co-owners, but at the rate The Hut was attracting more and more customers who pine for their authentic south-of-the-border tacos, burritos, quesadillas, and rice plates, they didn't have much of a choice.

What makes The Hut's Mex-

ican food the toast of the town is it's the closest tacos and burritos on island to the real deal in Mexico.

He said even Puerto Ricans, who at one point worked at the Saipan casino, and Mexican-Americans, who visited the islands for federal work, attested to the authenticity of The Hut's tacos, burritos, etc.

Deleon Guerrero attributes this to him and the co-owners—all his family members—living and attending college in San Diego, California where they consumed Mexican food like it was going out of fashion.

"There wasn't any week that we wouldn't get a burrito or taco or go to a Mexican shop or anything like that. So it all stemmed from there and then when we started to move back, we couldn't find a place that served authentic burritos and that's why we started to make our own."

The genesis of The Hut actually began in Lower Navy Hill in circa 2016—maybe even 2015 as Deleon Guerrero himself isn't sure—where they peddled tacos and burritos out

of their parents' home.

From there, they were hawk-ing their Mexican wrapped delights at the CNMI Liberation festival of 2017 and in the summer of 2017, The Hut food cart operation graduated to selling fish, chicken, and pork tacos at the Safehouse where their popularity spread like wildfire through word of mouth.

After several years of participating in various festival events and continuing operations at the Safehouse, the co-owners finally gathered enough of their own personal funds to have their brick-and-mortar debut via the aforementioned space next to R&J Wine, Liquor, and Tobacco in May 2020.

Unfortunately, shortly after signing their lease in February of 2020, the CNMI closed its borders and started to implement COVID-19 restrictions. The co-owners of The Hut had no choice but to find solutions to ensure renovations are completed in a short amount of time to enable them to open up whilst adhering to newly implemented COVID-19 restaurant health and safety requirements.

Deleon Guerrero said business was brisk when they were allowed to eventually open by mid-2020 despite operations limited to just three days a week.

Through the ups and downs of the pandemic, The Hut survived and trudged on before it finally dawned on them that the cramped environs of their old location was limiting the hopes and vision for The Hut.

Deleon Guerrero said parking obviously was an issue and they only had seven seats and a couple of tables to offer their customers. They also couldn't



MARK RABAGO

The Hut's new location at Rita's Building along Beach Road Garapan can comfortably seat 50 customers.

also offer drinks other than bottled water because they just didn't have enough space.

At Rita's Building, The Hut now offers an array of Mexican beers and is working on having a full bar for drinks—alcoholic or otherwise—and seats and tables for regulars and newcomers alike.

And that blank space on the north wall, Deleon Guerrero said they will soon fill that with a mural depicting images of the burrito shops that influenced The Hut when they were all growing up in one apartment in San Diego.

Deleon Guerrero also acknowledged that they did get \$10,000 from the Building Optimism, Opportunities and Stability Together Program and they've used the BOOST funds to defray some of the renovation costs of moving to a bigger place.



MARK RABAGO

The Hut will soon come out with new dishes to tickle the Mexican food-loving community's palate.

On promotions, The Hut currently has Taco Tuesdays where the beers are \$1 off and their 4-inch tacos (pork, chicken, beef, shrimp, and galbi) and 6-inch tacos (pork, beef, and fish) are available at reduced prices.

Deleon Guerrero also promises more new additions to The Hut's menu in the fol-

lowing months as he and the team eventually get the feel of running a full-fledged restaurant operation.

The Hut is open Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 8pm. For more information, call (670) 233-7111 or contact them through their social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.



MARK RABAGO

The Hut's tacos can be had for a fraction of the usual price during its Taco Tuesday promotion.

Computer breakdown sows chaos across US air travel system

NEW YORK (AP)—Thousands of flights across the U.S. were canceled or delayed Wednesday after a system that offers safety information to pilots failed, and the government launched an investigation into the breakdown, which grounded some planes for hours.

The Federal Aviation Administration said preliminary indications "traced the outage to a damaged database file." The agency said it would take steps to avoid another similar disruption.

The breakdown showed how much American air travel depends on the computer system that generates alerts called NOTAMs — or Notice to Air Missions.

Before a plane takes off, pilots and airline dispatchers must review the notices, which in-

clude details about bad weather, runway closures or other temporary factors that could affect the flight. The system was once telephone-based but moved online years ago.

The system broke down late Tuesday and was not fixed until midmorning Wednesday. The FAA took the rare step of preventing any planes from taking off for a time, and the cascading chaos led to more than 1,300 flight cancellations and 9,000 delays by early evening on the East Coast, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told a news conference that the problems "led to a ground stop because of the way safety information was moving through the system."

After the failures were fixed, he warned that travelers could

continue to see some effects "rippling through the system."

Buttigieg said his agency would now try to learn why the system went down.

Longtime aviation insiders could not recall an outage of such magnitude caused by a technology failure. Some compared it in scope to the nationwide shutdown of airspace after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

"Periodically there have been local issues here or there, but this is pretty significant historically," said Tim Campbell, a former senior vice president of air operations at American Airlines and now a consultant in Minneapolis.

Campbell said there has long been concern about the FAA's technology, and not just the NOTAM system.

Many of those systems "are

old mainframe systems that are generally reliable, but they are out of date," he said.

John Cox, a former airline pilot and aviation safety expert, said the aviation industry has talked for years about trying to modernize the NOTAM system, but he did not know the age of the servers that the FAA uses.

"I've been flying 53 years. I've never heard the system go down like this," Cox said. "So something unusual happened."

According to FAA advisories, the NOTAM system failed at 8:28 p.m. Tuesday, preventing new or amended notices from being distributed to pilots. The FAA resorted to a telephone hotline to keep departures flying overnight, but as air traffic picked up in the morning, the phone system was overwhelmed.

Dec. inflation report could show another month of cooling prices

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. inflation report for December being released Thursday morning could provide another welcome sign that the worst bout of spiking prices in four decades is slowly weakening.

Or it could suggest that inflation remains persistent enough to require tougher action by the Federal Reserve.

Most economists foresee the more optimistic scenario: They think December marked another month in which inflation, though still uncomfortably high, continued to cool. According to a survey by the data provider FactSet, analysts have predicted that consumer prices rose 6.5% in December compared with a year earlier. That would be down from 7.1% in

November and well below a 40-year high of 9.1% in June.

On a month-to-month basis, the economists think prices were flat in December. Even more significant, a closely watched gauge of "core" prices — which excludes volatile energy and food costs — is expected to have risen just 0.3% from November to December and 5.7% from a year earlier. The Fed closely tracks core prices, which it sees as a more accurate indicator of future inflation, in setting its interest rate policies.

Another modest rise in core prices would increase the likelihood that the Fed would raise its benchmark rate by just a quarter-point, rather than a half-point, when its next meeting ends Feb. 1.

Nation

In Washington, ‘classified’ is synonymous with ‘controversy’

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hillary Clinton’s presidential dreams were undermined by her use of a private email server that included classified information.

Donald Trump has risked criminal charges by refusing to return top-secret records to the government after leaving the White House.

And now misplaced files with classified markings could cause a political headache for President Joe Biden.

The three situations are far from equivalent. But taken together, they represent a remarkable stretch in which document management has been a recurring source of controversy at the highest levels of American politics.

For some, it’s a warning about clumsiness or hubris when it comes to handling official secrets. For others, it’s a reminder that the federal government has built an unwieldy — and perhaps unmanageable — system for storing and protecting classified information.

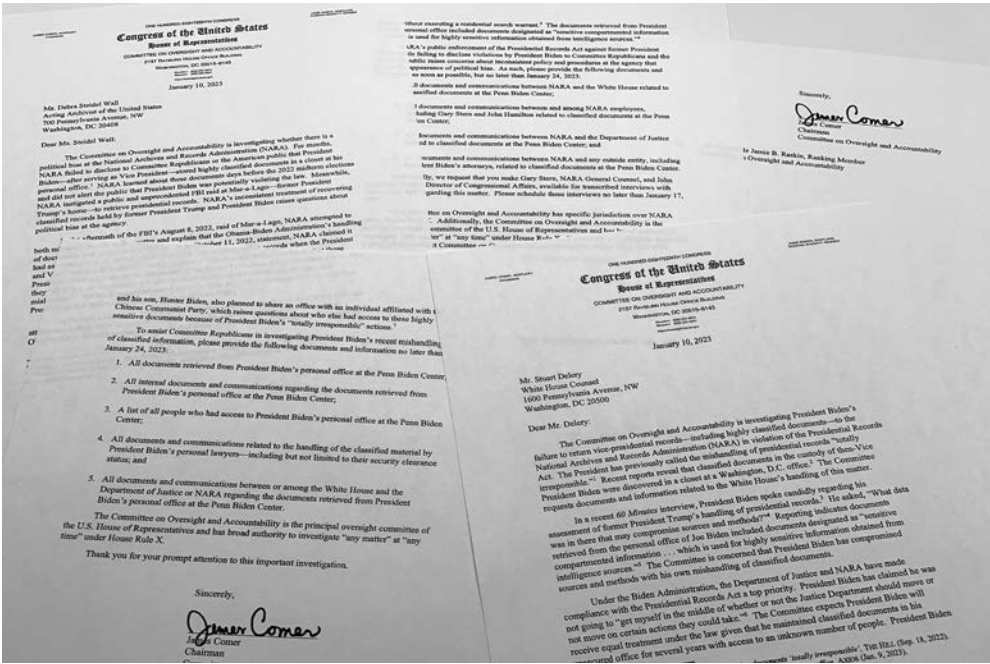
“Mistakes happen, and

it’s so easy to grab a stack of documents from your desk as you’re leaving your office, and you don’t realize there’s a classified document among those files,” said Mark Zaid, a lawyer who works on national security issues. “You just didn’t hear about it, for whatever reason.”

Now Americans are hearing about it all the time. Political talk shows have been clogged with conversations about which papers were stashed in which box in which closet. Voters are getting schooled in intelligence jargon like TS/SCI, HUMINT and damage assessments.

Clinton’s email server was a dominant storyline of her presidential campaign, and the criminal investigation into Trump has clouded his hopes of returning to the White House. Republicans who recently took control of the House are now poised to examine Biden’s own document practices as well, especially after a second batch of classified material was found.

“The American people are very well aware of issues in-



The letters from House Oversight Committee chairman Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., to Debra Steidel Wall, archivist of the United States, and White House Counsel Stuart Delery are photographed Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2023.

volving classified documents in part because we’ve been talking about them for almost eight years,” said Alex Conant, a Republican political consultant.

That’s when a House Repub-

lican committee investigating the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, discovered that Clinton had used a private email account while serving as secretary of state. The revelation led to a federal investigation that didn’t result in any charges, but 110 emails out of 30,000 that were turned over to the government were determined to have had classified

information.

Trump, who pummeled Clinton over her handling of the emails, won the election and swiftly demonstrated carelessness with secrets. He memorably discussed sensitive intelligence with the Russian ambassador to the United States, leading to concerns that he may have jeopardized a source who helped foil terror-

Storm-weary Californians clean up, brace for another torrent

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (AP)—Laurie Morse shoveled wet sand into bags in the pouring rain Wednesday, preparing to stack them along her garage in a last ditch effort to keep out a rising creek on California’s central coast, as the storm-ravaged state braced for another round of lashing rains and damaging winds.

Morse’s roof was leaking, and along with her neighbors near Santa Cruz, she’s spent every day of 2023 trying to figure out how to keep her house dry after an unrelenting onslaught of violent weather caused widespread damage over the past two weeks. Cars were submerged, trees uprooted and roofs blown off homes.

While the rain eased in many areas, thunderstorms led yet another atmospheric river into the northern half of the state and forecasters said the latest system would be followed by more storms this weekend and next week. From the San Francisco Bay Area down to Los Angeles, Californians had little time to rest between assessing damage from the last storm and preparing for the next.

Earlier this week, Morse and her fellow residents of tiny Rio Del Mar were or-

dered to evacuate as hillsides collapsed and massive logs and stumps tumbled down the bloated Aptos Creek from the Santa Cruz mountains into the Monterey Bay.

Now they were scrambling to clean up while simultaneously stacking sandbags and hoping for the best as the rain got heavier.

“It’s one step forward and two steps back right now,” said Morse, 59, a disabled Army veteran. “There’s so much damage already.”

The plume of moisture lurking off the northern coast stretched all the way over the Pacific to Hawaii, making the atmospheric river “a true Pineapple Express,” the National Weather Service said.

Michael Anderson, climatologist with the Department of Water Resources, said California has been hit by seven storms since the end of December and two more slightly weaker ones were expected before the state gets a reprieve by the end of next week.

“The challenge is they’re storms eight and nine in the sequence and the cumulative effect is likely to cause impacts larger than the storms themselves might cause,” Anderson said.

At least 18 people have

ist plots.

After disputing the results of his election defeat, Trump left office in haphazard fashion, and he brought boxes of government documents with him to Mar-a-Lago, his Florida resort. Some of them were turned over to the National Archives, which is responsible for presidential records, but he refused to provide others.

Eventually the Justice Department, fearing that national security secrets were at risk, obtained a search warrant and found more top secret documents at the resort.

A special counsel was appointed to determine whether any criminal charges should be filed in the case or a separate investigation into Trump’s attempts to cling to power on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters attacked the U.S. Capitol.

Larry Pfeiffer, a former intelligence official, said the situation with Trump’s documents is far different than ones he encountered while working in government.

During the time that Pfeiffer was CIA chief of staff, classified files turned up in the wrong place in presidential libraries a handful of times, he said.

died in the storms battering the state. The figure is likely to rise, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday during a visit to the scenic town of Capitola, just up the Santa Cruz coast from Rio Del Mar, that was hard hit by flooding creek waters. Raging surf destroyed an iconic pier.

A 43-year-old woman was found dead Wednesday in her submerged car a day after calling 911 to say the vehicle was stuck in floodwaters north of San Francisco, according to the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office. When the search resumed at sunrise, divers discovered the car under about 10 feet (3 meters) of water off a rural road near Forestville, the department said.

More than half of California’s 58 counties were declared disaster areas and repairing the damage may cost more than \$1 billion, according to Brian Ferguson, spokesperson for the state Office of Emergency Services.

Crews worked to reopen major highways that were closed by rockslides, swamped by flooding or smothered with mud while more than 10,000 people who were ordered out of seaside towns on the central coast were allowed to return home.

ACROSS THE NATION

University of Idaho stabbings suspect to appear in court

BOISE, Idaho (AP)—The man accused in the fatal stabbings of four University of Idaho students is expected to appear in court Thursday, a day after classes resumed for undergraduates, many of whom until recent days were stricken by fear over the case.

Bryan Kohberger, the 28-year-old Washington State University graduate student charged in the case, has yet to enter a plea and is waiting to learn whether prosecutors in the high-profile case will pursue the death penalty. Thursday’s hearing is a status conference, which often deal with scheduling of court dates.

Nearly two months after the four students were killed near campus—and two weeks after Kohberger was arrested and charged with the crime—the picturesque school grounds were starting to feel a little closer to normal.

On Wednesday, the first day of classes after winter break, students were once again striding across the university’s frosty sidewalks and crowding the campus food court.

A general feeling of relief was in the air, university spokesperson Jodi Walker said.

“The students are back and enrollments are looking

good,” Walker said. “I think everybody’s happy to be back under the circumstances. They’re relieved that an arrest has been made, and ready to focus on the semester.”

White House: Jill Biden has two cancerous lesions removed

WASHINGTON (AP)—Surgeons removed a cancerous lesion above first lady Jill Biden’s right eye and one on her chest, the White House said Wednesday, while a third lesion on her left eyelid was being examined.

Dr. Kevin O’Connor, the physician to President Joe Biden, said examinations showed that the lesion over Jill Biden’s right eye and one newly discovered on her chest were both confirmed to be basal cell carcinoma. The lesion on her left eyelid was “fully excised, with margins, and was sent for standard microscopic examination,” according to O’Connor’s report.

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common type of skin cancer, but also the most curable form. It’s considered highly treatable, especially when caught early. It is a slow-growing cancer that usually is confined to the surface of skin—doctors almost always can remove it all with a shallow incision—and seldom causes serious com-

plications or becomes life-threatening.

Los Angeles chief ‘deeply concerned’ by 2 police shootings

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Los Angeles police chief said Wednesday he is concerned about two recent fatal police shootings, including one in which officers failed to call for a specially trained mental health team during an interaction with a man in crisis.

Chief Michel Moore said Wednesday that he is “deeply concerned” by the deaths of those men, as well as a third, over two days—two fatally shot by officers and one who went into cardiac arrest hours after police used a stun gun during a struggle.

The Los Angeles County coroner’s office is still investigating the cases of Keenan Anderson, the cardiac arrest patient who is related to a Black Lives Matter co-founder, and Oscar Sanchez. The office has not yet ruled on the cause and manner of their deaths. Both died on Jan. 3.

Takar Smith’s death was ruled a homicide by gunshot wounds, which is standard procedure following fatal police shootings. His wife had sought help from police for a restraining order violation on Jan. 2 and warned the LAPD of her husband’s mental health condition.

Asia

Taliban ban on women workers hits vital aid for Afghans

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Last June, a team of female doctors and nurses drove six hours across mountains, dry riverbeds and on unpaved roads to reach victims of a massive earthquake that had just hit eastern Afghanistan, killing more than 1,000 people.

When they got there, a day after the earthquake hit, they found the men had been treated, but the women had not. In Afghanistan's deeply conservative society, the women had stayed inside their tents, unable to come out to get medical help and other assistance because there were no women aid workers.

"The women still had blood on them," said Samira Sayed-Rahman, from the aid agency International Rescue Committee. It was only after she met local elders to tell them about the arrival of a female medical team that women came out to get treatment. "That's not just the situation in emergencies; in many parts of the country, women don't go out to get aid," she said.

It's an example, Sayed-Rahman said, of how vital women workers are to humanitarian

operations in Afghanistan — and shows the impact that will be felt after the Taliban last month barred Afghan women from working in non-governmental organizations.

The ban, announced Dec. 24, forced a widespread shutdown of many aid operations by organizations that said they cannot and would not work without their female staff. Aid agencies warn that hundreds of thousands are already hurt by the halt in services and that, if the ban continues, the dire and even deadly consequences will spiral wider for a population battered by decades of war, deteriorating living conditions and economic hardship.

Aid agencies and NGOs have been keeping Afghanistan alive since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. The takeover triggered a halt in international financing, a freeze in currency reserves and a cut-off from global banking, collapsing the already fragile economy. NGOs have stepped into the breach, and providing everything from food provisions to basic services like health care and education.

After the ban, 11 major international aid groups along with



A Save the Children nutrition counsellor, right, explains to Nelab, 22, how to feed her 11-month-old daughter, Parsto, with therapeutic food, which is used to treat severe acute malnutrition, in Sar-e-Pul province of Afghanistan, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022.

some smaller ones suspended their operations completely, saying they cannot operate without their women workers. Many others have reduced their work dramatically. A post-ban survey of 151 local and international NGOs found that only about 14% were still operating at full capacity, according

to U.N. Women.

U.N. agencies have continued working — most vitally to largely maintain the food lifeline that is keeping millions of Afghans out of starvation. Despite the ban, the World Food Programme provided

food staples or cash transfers for food to 13 million people in December and the first week of January — more than a quarter of Afghanistan's population of some 40 million.

The extent of the ban's implementation and enforcement

is unclear. In some places, some women have been able to continue working in the field.

Still, the impact is already great, agencies say.

The International Rescue Committee, which has suspended all its operations, estimates that around 165,000 people missed out on its health services between Dec. 24 and Jan. 9. It warned of an increase of death and disease because of the ban and an increased burden on Afghanistan's health system, which it said is "already fragile, near-to-collapse, and NGO-dependent."

IRC supports more than 100 health facilities in 11 provinces, including 30 mobile health teams, in some cases delivering lifesaving help to remote areas that had no humanitarian aid of any kind.

"It's the only healthcare that some women have access to," said Sayed-Rahman of the mobile teams. "Parts of Afghanistan still don't have hospitals, clinics or other medical facilities. With each day that passes, the suspension has a huge impact on the amount of aid being delivered."

South Korea plans fund to compensate forced labor victims

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korean officials are considering creating a domestic fund to compensate Koreans who were enslaved by Japanese companies before the end of World War II, as they desperately try to repair relations with Tokyo that have deteriorated in recent years over historical grievances.

The plan, revealed during a public hearing organized by Seoul's Foreign Ministry on Thursday, was met with fierce criticism by victims and their legal representatives, who have demanded that the reparations come from Japan.

Relations between Seoul and Tokyo have been strained since South Korea's Supreme Court in 2018 upheld lower court verdicts and ordered Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to compensate Korean forced laborers.

The companies have refused to carry out the orders and the plaintiffs have responded by pursuing legal steps aimed at forcing the companies to sell off their local assets to provide compensation, a process South Korean officials fear would cause further rupture between Seoul and Tokyo. Victims have also demanded the Japanese companies issue an apology over their ordeals.

Ties between the U.S. Asian

allies have long been complicated by grievances related to Japan's brutal rule of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945, when hundreds of thousands of Koreans were mobilized as forced laborers for Japanese companies or sex slaves at Tokyo's wartime brothels.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, a conservative who took office in May, has been eager to improve ties with Japan as they pursue stronger trilateral security cooperation with Washington in the face of the growing North Korean nuclear threat.

He met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Cambodia in November in the first bilateral summit between the countries in three years, where they expressed commitment to swiftly resolve "pending" bilateral issues, which clearly referred to the forced labor dispute.

During Thursday's public hearing at the National Assembly, South Korean Foreign Ministry official Seo Min-jung said her government's priority is to arrange the payments as quickly as possible, noting that many forced labor victims are already dead and most known survivors are in their 90s.

She said it would be "impossible" to make the Japa-

nese companies apologize on behalf of the broader forced labor issue, which for decades has been a major cause of the diplomatic impasse.

It would be important that Japan sincerely maintains and inherits the poignant expressions of apology and remorse that it already expressed in the past," said Seo, the ministry's director of Asia and Pacific Affairs.

Seo said the payments could possibly be handled by the Seoul-based Foundation for Victims of Forced Mobilization by Imperial Japan. Shim Kyu-sun, the foundation's chairman, said the payments could be funded by South Korean firms that benefited from Japanese economic assistance when the companies normalized their ties in the 1960s, including steel giant POSCO.

"The Japanese companies have reduced much of their economic activity in South Korea and withdrawn (many of their) assets, so it's not even clear whether a liquidation process would be enough to provide compensation to the plaintiffs," said Seo.

She said government officials planned to meet the victims and their family members in person to explain the payment plans and seek their consent.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Official: Explosion near Foreign Ministry in Kabul kills 5

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An explosion near the Foreign Ministry in the Afghan capital on Wednesday killed five people and wounded several others, a Taliban police spokesman said, the second prominent attack in Kabul so far in 2023.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — has increased its assaults since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of the country's Shiite minority.

The mid-afternoon explosion was followed by peals of sirens. Taliban security forces prevented journalists from getting close to the site, threatening them with guns and telling them to leave.

Kabul police chief spokesman Khalid Zadrán said security teams have been deployed to the site. Later he said that as the result of the explosion, "five of our civilians were killed and a number of others were wounded."

Zadrán offered no other details on the source of the

blast or say how many people were wounded. Taliban government officials did not respond to requests seeking additional comment.

China FM on Africa visit sidesteps call for UN council seat

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—China's new foreign minister, Qin Gang, has sidestepped a new call by the African Union for permanent representation on the U.N. Security Council during his visit to Ethiopia.

Speaking at the opening of the Chinese-built headquarters of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, Qin instead emphasized China's partnership with Africa in security and economic development.

In a statement dated early Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry quoted Qin as saying Beijing supports the African Union's "greater representation and voice at the UN Security Council and other international organizations," but made no direct reference to permanent representation.

African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat told a joint news conference that Africa's lack of permanent representation on the Security Council is a

"burning issue," considering that most issues on the council agenda are related to African countries.

Ally of ex-Pakistan PM wins confidence vote in blow to gov't

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP)—A political ally of Pakistan's former prime minister won a vote of confidence early Thursday in the Punjab Assembly, a major blow to the federal government, officials said.

Pervez Elahi secured 186 votes in the 371-seat Punjab Assembly to remain the chief minister in Punjab, weeks after the provincial governor, Balighur Rehman, sacked him. Rehman claimed he had lost the confidence of a majority in the legislature.

Elahi's win was a major challenge to the federal government of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, whose Pakistan Muslim League party is in opposition in the country's most populous Punjab province.

The vote came weeks after former prime minister Imran Khan said his party was quitting Pakistan's two regional and national assemblies to pressure Sharif's government to hold early national elections.

World

Battle rages in Ukraine town; Russia shakes up its military

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—The fate of a devastated salt-mining town in eastern Ukraine hung in the balance Wednesday in one of the bloodiest battles of Russia's invasion, while Ukraine's unflagging resistance and other challenges prompted Moscow to shake up its military leadership again.

Russian forces used jets, mortars and rockets to bombard Soledar in an unrelenting assault.

Soledar's fall, while unlikely a turning point in the nearly 11-month war, would be a prize for a Kremlin starved of good battlefield news in recent months. It would also offer Russian troops a springboard to conquer other areas of Donetsk province that remain under Ukrainian control, such as the nearby strategic city of Bakhmut.

Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk province, which together make up the Donbas region bordering Russia, were Moscow's main stated territorial targets in invading Ukraine, but the fighting has settled mostly into a stalemate.

In an apparent recognition of battlefield setbacks, Russia's Defense Ministry announced the demotion of the head of Russian forces in Ukraine after only three months on the job. Russia's

top military officer — the chief of the military's General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov — was named as the replacement for Gen. Sergei Surovikin, who was demoted to deputy.

During his short time overseeing the troops in Ukraine, Surovikin was credited with strengthening coordination, reinforcing control and introducing a campaign to knock out Ukraine's public utilities as a pressure tactic. But he also announced a humiliating withdrawal in November from Kherson, the only regional center Russian forces had captured just weeks after the Kremlin illegally annexed the area. His demotion signaled that Russian President Vladimir Putin wasn't fully satisfied with his performance.

Gerasimov, meanwhile, was seen as the top architect of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and critics have blamed him for Moscow's military setbacks.

Britain's Defense Ministry said putting Gerasimov in charge is "an indicator of the increasing seriousness of the situation Russia is facing, and a clear acknowledgement that the campaign is falling short of Russia's strategic goals." It added in a tweet that Russian ultra-nationalists and military bloggers critical of Gerasimov



A Ukrainian serviceman smokes a cigarette at his position at the frontline near Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023.

are likely to greet the news with "extreme displeasure."

The Russian Defense Ministry's formal explanation was that expanded military tasks and the need for "closer interaction between branches of the military as well as increasing the quality of supplies and the efficiency of directing groups of forces" prompted the leadership changes.

On the battlefield, a Ukrainian officer, near Soledar, told The Associated Press

the pattern is that first the Russians send one or two waves of soldiers, many from the private Russian military contractor Wagner Group, who take heavy casualties as they probe the Ukrainian defenses. When Ukrainian troops suffer casualties and are exhausted, the Russians send a fresh wave of highly-trained soldiers, paratroopers or special forces, said the Ukrainian officer, who insisted on anonymity for security reasons.

Ukrainian officials denied Russian claims that Soledar had fallen but the Wagner Group's owner repeated the assertion of a breakthrough late Wednesday.

"Once again I want to confirm the complete liberation and cleansing of the territory of Soledar from units of the Ukrainian army," Yevgeny Prigozhin wrote on his Russian social media platform. "Civilians were withdrawn. Ukrainian units that did not want to surrender were destroyed." He claimed about 500 people were killed and that "the whole city is littered with the corpses of Ukrainian soldiers."

Ukraine's military said late Wednesday Russian forces had suffered "huge losses" in the Soledar fighting.

The AP was unable independently to verify either side's claims.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stopped short of declaring the municipality's capture, telling reporters Russian

forces had achieved "positive dynamics in advancing" in Soledar. "Let's not rush, and wait for official statements," he added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy weighed in Wednesday in his nightly video address: "Now the terrorist state and its propagandists are trying to pretend that some part of our city of Soledar — a city that was almost completely destroyed by the occupiers — is allegedly some kind of Russia's achievement." He said Ukrainian forces in the area are holding out against the Russians.

Soledar, known for salt mining and processing, has little intrinsic value but it lies at a strategic point 10 kilometers (six miles) north of the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces want to surround.

Taking Bakhmut would disrupt Ukraine's supply lines and open a route for the Russians to press toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk province.

Soledar's fall would make "holding Bakhmut much more precarious for Ukraine," Michael Kofman, the director of Russia Studies at the CAN nonprofit research group in Arlington, Virginia, noted.

The war of attrition, with heavy casualties, may make a Russian victory as deadly as a defeat.

"I don't think the outcome at Bakhmut is that significant compared to what it costs Russia to achieve it," Kofman said in a tweet.

The Wagner Group, which now reportedly includes a large contingent of convicts recruited in Russian prisons and constitutes up to a quarter of all Russian combatants in Ukraine, has spearheaded the attack on Soledar and Bakhmut.

Brazil 'mega-protest' fizzles amid authorities' concern

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP)—Skittish Brazilian authorities on Wednesday spared no effort to boost security in the face of a social media flyer promoting a "mega-protest to retake power" in two dozen cities. Whether because of preventative measures adopted or not, the supposed uprising was a dud.

Less than 10 protesters showed along Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach; there were more journalists in attendance, plus 29 police vehicles. On Brasilia's esplanade surrounded by federal government buildings, authorities had designated an area for protest and stationed police and national guard troops. Just one couple showed, dressed in the same Brazil soccer jerseys that thousands of rioters wore four days earlier.

"We were surprised to be the only ones here today," said Eunice Carvalho, a 58-year-old housewife joined by her husband. "People got scared after the imprisonments, which were excessive."

Speaking to journalists in Brasilia earlier, the federal appointee who has assumed control of the capital's security said police were shutting down the main avenue to traffic, limiting

pedestrian access with barricades and blocking all access to the square that was the site of Sunday's mayhem.

"The right to protest freely will always be respected and cannot be confused with terrorism," said the official, Ricardo Cappelli.

Citing the call to protest, a Supreme Court justice ordered local authorities in cities across Brazil to prevent protesters from blocking roads or occupying public spaces and buildings. Justice Alexandre de Moraes also ordered arrests and fines for people and companies who participate or help with logistics and funding.

The all-hands response—and the subsequent tranquility—underscored just how jumpy authorities remain after supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro rampaged through Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace on Sunday, laying ruin to the government's three most important buildings. Officials arrested or detained some 1,500 people by the following morning, hundreds of whom were sent to prison.

Though there is no evidence of fraud in the Oct. 30 presiden-

tial election, the protesters have claimed the true winner was far-right Bolsonaro. He has fired up his base about the vulnerability of electronic voting machines despite independent experts' assurances they are closely scrutinized. Bolsonaro also has warned his supporters that the election's leftist victor, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, would impose communism.

The call for a fresh uprising Wednesday sparked concern that the crackdown hadn't damped the will of radicals. Among those who vow to continue struggling is Daniel Bressan, 35, who traveled some 300 miles from the interior of Parana state to join Sunday's protest in Brasilia. He was detained by police the next morning, though he denies participating in any of the vandalism.

"A lot of people are going to be afraid to go to the streets and be arrested—I myself fear persecution by the legal system—but I'm not going to stop fighting and I'm not going to get discouraged," Bressan said by phone from the federal police's temporary holding center. "I'm ready for everything. Our freedom is worth more than our lives."

Jailing rioters represents only part of the government's effort to hold people responsible, with authorities also seeking to track down those who enabled the uprising. That includes organizers who summoned protesters to the capital and paid their way as well as local security personnel accused of either standing by and allowing the destruction to occur, or even cooperating.

Peru anti-government protests spread, with clashes in Cusco

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Protests against Peruvian President Dina Boluarte's government that have left 48 people dead since they began a month ago spread through the south of the Andean country on Wednesday with new clashes reported in the tourist city of Cusco.

Health officials in Cusco said 37 civilians and six police officers were injured after protesters tried to take over the city's airport, where many foreign tourists arrive to see sites including the nearby Incan citadel of Machu Picchu.

Protests and road blockades against Boluarte and in support of ousted President Pedro Castillo were also seen

in 41 provinces, mainly in Peru's south.

The unrest began in early December following the destitution and arrest of Castillo, Peru's first president of humble, rural roots, following his widely condemned attempt to dissolve Congress and head off his own impeachment.

The protest, mainly in neglected rural areas of the country still loyal to Castillo, are seeking immediate elections, Boluarte's resignation, Castillo's release and justice for the protesters killed in clashes with police.

Some of the worst protest violence came on Monday when 17 people were killed in clash-

es with police in the city Juliaca near Lake Titicaca and protesters later attacked and burned a police officer to death.

On Wednesday, health officials in Cusco said that a civilian died after being hit by gunfire.

Earlier, Peru's Ombudsman's Office had said that 39 civilians had been killed in clashes with police and another seven died in traffic accidents related to road blockades, as well as the fallen police officer. Wednesday's death increases the toll to 48.

On Tuesday, Peru's government announced a three-day curfew from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. in Puno.

Science & Technology

Russia will launch new capsule to return space station crew

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia will send up a new capsule next month to bring back three space station crew members whose original ride home was damaged, officials said Wednesday.

The two Russians and one American will stay several extra months at the International Space Station as a result of the capsule switch, possibly pushing their mission to close to a year, NASA and Russian space officials told reporters.

Cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin, and astronaut Frank Rubio were supposed to return in March in the same Soyuz capsule that took them up last September. But that capsule was hit by a tiny meteoroid on Dec. 14, creating a small hole in the exterior radiator and sending coolant spewing into space.

Sergei Krikalev, head of

human spaceflight for the Russian Space Agency, said barring an emergency at the space station, it would be too dangerous for the crew to use that capsule to return to Earth.

Although Russian engineers believe the capsule could survive reentry and land safely, the cabin temperature could reach the low 40s Celsius (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit) with high humidity because it couldn't shed heat generated by a computer and other electronics, noted Krikalev, a former cosmonaut.

The new Soyuz capsule will be launched from Kazakhstan on Feb. 20, a month earlier than planned. No one will be on board; the capsule will fly in automatic mode, Russian Space Agency chief Yuri Borisov announced earlier in the day. The original plan was to launch this new Soyuz in



The photo provided by NASA shows the Soyuz MS-22 crew ship pictured on Oct. 8, 2022, in the foreground docked to the Rassvet module as the International Space Station orbited 264 miles above Europe. In the background, is the Prichal docking module attached to the Nauka multipurpose laboratory module.

March with two Russians and one American, replacements for the three already up there.

This new crew will now have to wait until late summer or fall to fly when another capsule is

ready for them.

Russia will eventually bring back the damaged capsule with only science samples on board.

NASA took part in all the discussions and agreed with the plan.

"Right now, the crew is safe on board space station," said NASA's space station program manager Joel Montalbano. "There's no immediate need for the crew to come home today."

Backup plans are in the

works, according to Montalbano and Krikalev, in case an emergency forces the seven space station residents to flee before the new Soyuz can be launched—like a fire or decompression. NASA is looking at the possibility of adding extra crew to the SpaceX capsule currently docked at the station.

Neither Krikalev nor Montalbano could recall a similar case in which a substitute spacecraft needed to be quickly launched.

Borisov said analysis confirmed the leak was caused by a micrometeoroid, not a piece of spacecraft debris or manufacturing defect. The resulting hole was about 1 millimeter in size or less than one-tenth of an inch.

Montalbano said the three crew members took the news in stride.

"I may have to find some more ice cream to reward them" on future cargo deliveries, he told reporters.

Besides Prokopyev, Petelin and Rubio, the space station is home to NASA astronauts Nicole Mann and Josh Cassada; Russian Anna Kikina and Japan's Koichi Wakata. The four rode up on a SpaceX capsule last October.

Old NASA satellite falls harmlessly from sky off Alaska

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)—After almost 40 years circling Earth, a retired NASA science satellite plunged harmlessly through the atmosphere off the coast of Alaska, NASA reported Monday.

The Defense Department confirmed that the satellite—

placed in orbit in 1984 by astronaut Sally Ride—reentered late Sunday night over the Bering Sea, a few hundred miles from Alaska. NASA said it's received no reports of injury or damage from falling debris.

Late last week, NASA said it expected most of the

5,400-pound (2,450-kilogram) Earth Radiation Budget Satellite to burn up in the atmosphere, but that some pieces might survive. The space agency put the odds of falling debris injuring someone at 1-in-9,400.

Space shuttle Challenger

carried the satellite into orbit and the first American woman in space set it free. The satellite measured ozone in the atmosphere and studied how Earth absorbed and radiated energy from the sun, before being retired in 2005, well beyond its expected working lifetime.

EXPLAINER:

How NOTAM caused widespread flight disruptions

DALLAS (AP)—Until Wednesday, few travelers had ever heard of a Notice to Air Missions, or NOTAM, nor did they know that the system used to generate those notices could cause widespread travel misery.

As they arrived at airports in the morning, they quickly found out.

The Federal Aviation Administration computer system that compiles and distributes essential safety information for pilots went kaput. That temporarily grounded all flights nationwide and touched off a cascading air traffic jam that will take at least a day to unclog. More than 1,300 flights were canceled and 9,000 delayed by early evening on the East Coast because of the outage, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.

The system has been around for more than a half century and it has evolved from paper to computers. It's in the process of being updated.

WHAT ARE NOTAMs?

They are compilations of essential preflight information for pilots, airline dispatchers and others that include details about things such as potential bad weather on the route, runway and taxiway changes at airports

and closed airspace that must be avoided. The notices began in 1947 and were modeled after a system used to warn ship captains of hazards on the seas.

A pilot can't legally take off until he or she has reviewed the information. John Hansman, an aeronautics professor at MIT, said most airlines subscribe to services that gather NOTAM information from the FAA and package it for each flight. Airline dispatch centers relay it to pilots. In this case, the services couldn't get the information because the FAA system malfunctioned, he said.

WHAT WENT WRONG WITH THE SYSTEM?

The FAA said preliminary indications "traced the outage to a damaged database file." The agency said it would take steps to avoid another similar disruption.

The system stopped working at 8:28 p.m. Eastern time on Tuesday, but because there weren't many departures at that hour, pilots were able to get the information verbally. At daybreak in the East, the system was still out, and there were too many flights leaving to brief pilots individually.

It's likely that the main sys-

tem had a problem, and the backup didn't work correctly. The FAA rebooted the main system around 5 a.m., but it took a while to verify that all the information was validated and available, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. So the FAA ordered all flights grounded Wednesday morning and planes were stuck for hours "to make absolutely sure the messages were moving correctly and the information for safety purposes is working the way it should," Buttigieg said.

Longtime aviation insiders could not recall a systemwide FAA outage of this magnitude caused by a technology breakdown.

HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDING?

Buttigieg said that the NOTAM system is constantly being updated, and a key question is whether it's outdated.

"We will not allow anything to take place that is not safe," Buttigieg told reporters. "This is precisely why our focus right now is on understanding, identifying and correcting anything related to the root cause of how this happened in the first place."

Rep. Sam Graves, R-Mo., said the NOTAM malfunction

is inexcusable, and a result of a Transportation Department and FAA "failure to properly maintain and operate the air traffic control system."

Graves, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said the FAA has been without a permanent leader for nearly a year. He said he expects a full briefing on the outage.

HAS THERE BEEN A PROBLEM WITH THE SYSTEM BEFORE THIS?

Not of this magnitude. "Periodically there have been local issues here or there, but this is pretty significant historically," said Tim Campbell, a former senior vice president of air operations at American Airlines and now a consultant in Minneapolis. While the cause of Tuesday's breakdown was not immediately clear, Campbell said there was concern about FAA's technology, and not just the NOTAM system.

Other FAA technology also is aging, Campbell said. "So much of their systems are old mainframe systems that are generally reliable but they are out of date," he said.

The bipartisan infrastructure law passed last year allocated \$25 billion to airports, with

roughly \$5 billion for air traffic control facilities. Congressional staffers said some of that money could be spent on equipment. But Buttigieg said any NOTAM upgrade may have to wait for a new FAA funding bill.

"I think this gives us a really important data point and a really important moment to under-

stand what we're going to need moving forward," he said.

The National Transportation Safety Board has criticized the way NOTAMs are presented after an Air Canada jet nearly landed on four other planes waiting to take off from San Francisco International Airport in 2017. Pilots had missed information about a closed runway that was buried among numerous notices.

Science Matters

Asia is home to a great many animal species and has many biodiversity hotspots — diversity that developed after the Age of Dinosaurs ended 66 million years ago.

Asia: Where mammals proliferated

Two historic causes of increasing animal diversity:

1 Dramatic mountain building as an advancing plate of Earth's crust pushed up the Himalayan Mountains and created vast, flat highlands

2 Major climate changes as sea level fell during ice ages, Asia's interior became deserts and its monsoons intensified

Tracing evolution through genetics

New study traced the branching of family trees of 1,543 species of Asian mammals and their historic and current ranges

Map of regions studied

1 The tropical forests of Southern Asia were the main cradle of new mammal species

2 Some new species migrated away and colonized new areas

3 Certain mountain hotspots acted as accumulation centers for new arrivals rather than as centers of diversification

Those hotspots now have high diversity of mammals that originated elsewhere

Bactrian camel

Yellow mongoose

Source: Chinese Academy of Sciences, Institute of Zoology; Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago); TNS Photos
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service © 2022 TNS

Photo by Yathin S. Krishnappa

Off The Wall

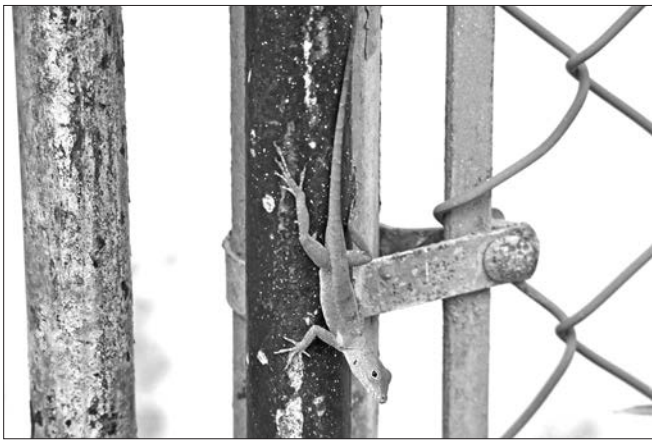
Forest lizards genetically morph to survive life in the city

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—Lizards that once dwelled in forests but now slink around urban areas have genetically morphed to survive life in the city, researchers have found.

The Puerto Rican crested anole, a brown lizard with a bright orange throat fan, has sprouted special scales to better cling to smooth surfaces like walls and windows and grown larger limbs to sprint across open areas, scientists say.

"We are watching evolution as it's unfolding," said Kristin Winchell, a biology professor at NYU and main author of the study published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

As urbanization intensifies around the world, it's important to understand how organisms adapt and humans can design cities in ways that support all species, Winchell said. The study analyzed 96 An-



In this photo courtesy of evolutionary biologist Kristin Winchell, an *Anolis cristatellus* lizard stands on a gate in Rincon, Puerto Rico, Jan. 6, 2018.

olis cristatellus lizards, comparing the genetic makeup of forest-dwellers to those living in Puerto Rico's capital, San Juan, as well as the northern city of Arecibo and western city of Mayaguez. Scientists found that 33 genes within the lizard genome were repeatedly associated with urbanization.

"You can hardly get closer

to a smoking gun!" said Wouter Halfwerk, an evolutionary ecologist and professor at Vrije University Amsterdam who

was not involved in the study.

He said he was impressed that the scientists were able to detect such a clear genomic signature of adaptation: "The ultimate goal within the field of urban adaptive evolution is to find evidence for heritable traits and their genomic architecture."

Winchell said the lizards' physical differences appeared to be mirrored at the genomic level.

"If urban populations are evolving with parallel physical and genomic changes, we may even be able to predict how populations will respond to urbanization just by looking at genetic markers," she said.

The changes in these lizards, whose lifespans are roughly 7

years, can occur very quickly, within 30 to 80 generations, enabling them to escape from predators and survive in urban areas, Winchell added. The larger limbs, for example, enable them to run more quickly across a hot parking lot, and the special scales to hold onto surfaces far more smooth than trees.

"They can't dig their claws into it. ... (Or) squirrel around to the backside," she noted.

The scientists chased after dozens of lizards for their study, catching them with their hands or using fishing poles with a tiny lasso to snag them.

"It takes some practice," Winchell said.

On occasion, they had to ask permission to catch lizards

off people's homes.

Among Winchell's favorite findings was a rare albino lizard. She also found a nearly 8-inch (20-centimeter) one, rather large for the species, that she nicknamed "Godzilla."

The study focused on adult male lizards, so it's unclear if females are changing in the same way or at the same rate as males, and at which point in a lizard's life the changes are occurring.

Halfwerk, whose own research showed how one frog species changed its mating call in urban areas, said scientists should look next for possible constraints on the evolutionary response and how morphology relates to mating behavior.

Tagovailoa, Zaporizhzhia make list of most mangled words

BOSTON (AP)—"Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa explained the significance of the Chicxulub impact crater to actor Domhnall Gleeson over a drink of negroni sbagliato in the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia," is the kind of sentence that just might tie your tongue up in knots.

It contains five examples from this year's list of the most mispronounced words released Wednesday by The Captioning Group, which since 1991 has captioned and subtitled real-time events on television in the U.S. and Canada.

The Captioning Group has compiled the list since 2016 by surveying the words and names most often mangled on live television by newsreaders, politicians, public figures and others. It is commissioned by Babbel, the online language learning company based in New York and Berlin.

Yes, the list is a little humorous, but it's also educational and highlights how some of the biggest international news events of the year have entered the North American consciousness, said Esteban Touma, a senior content producer and language teacher at Babbel.

"It really shows the ways we interact with other languages and really gives a good grasp of what's going on in the world and how we connect with people abroad," he said.

Don't be intimidated by tough-to-pronounce words, he said. It is an opportunity to learn. After all, even professionals sometimes have problems.

"People want to get the right pronunciation but it's hard to



Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa (1) looks to pass before San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa (97) caused Tagovailoa to fumble, which 49ers linebacker Dre Greenlaw returned for a touchdown, during the second half of an NFL football game in Santa Clara, Calif., Sunday, Dec. 4,

do so," he said.

Just ask Joe Biden.

New British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was famously referred to as "Rasheed Sanoon" by the U.S. president, but he wasn't the only one to stumble over the name, which should be pronounced REE-shee SOO-nahk.

Then there's Grammy-winning singer Adele, who informed the world in October that her fans have for years been mispronouncing her name. It's not "ah-DELL" but "uh-DALE."

The other words on the list, with phonetic pronunciations provided by Babbel, were:

■ **Chicxulub** (CHICK-choo-loob)—The crater in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the asteroid that scientists say likely caused the extinction of the dinosaurs was in the news recently.

■ **Domhnall Gleeson** (DOH-null GLEE-sun)—The Irish actor called out talk show host Stephen Colbert for mispronouncing his first name.

■ **Edinburgh** (ed-in-BRUH)—American news anchors faced criticism for mispronouncing the Scottish capital during coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's memorial in September.

■ **Negroni sbagliato** (ne-GRO-nee spah-lee-AH-toh)—The alcoholic beverage was introduced to the world by actor Emma D'Arcy, whose social media mention of the drink received more than 14 million views.

■ **Novak Djokovic** (NO-vak JO-kuh-vich)—The Serbian tennis star was in the news in January when he was barred from competing in the Australian Open and deported for failing to comply with the

nation's COVID-19 vaccination rules.

■ **Ohtani rule** (oh-TAHN-ee)—Major League Baseball's rule named after 2021 AL MVP Shohei Ohtani allows a starting pitcher to remain in a game as the designated hitter even after leaving the mound.

■ **Tuanigamanuolepola** (Tua) Tagovailoa (TOO-uh-ning-uh-mah-noo-oh-LEH-po-luh TUNG-o-vai-LOH-uh)—The Miami Dolphins quarterback became the center of discussion about NFL concussion protocols after suffering injuries in consecutive games.

■ **Zaporizhzhia** (zah-POH-reezha)—The Ukrainian city is the location of Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which was shut down in September as the nation's war with Russia raged in the area.

Mega Millions swells to \$1.1B after 3-month losing trend

CHICAGO (AP)—After nearly three months of lottery losing, will someone break the trend Tuesday night and win a \$1.1 billion Mega Millions jackpot?

Regardless of how long it takes, the odds of winning the top lottery prize don't change, and they're formidable at 1 in 302.6 million. But someone will eventually match all six numbers and win the jackpot, which now ranks as the fifth-largest in U.S. history.

The \$1.1 billion prize is for a winner who chooses to be paid through an annuity with 30 payments over 29 years. Winners usually prefer cash, which for Tuesday night's drawing would be an estimated \$568.7 million.

Customers at Lucky Mart on Chicago's South Side on Tuesday were hoping they picked a winner.

Toni Woods, a retired city worker, said that if she won, the first thing she would do was give her church 10%.

After that, Woods, 73, said, "I've got a list of people that need things, my family members, I would take care of them." Then she'd go on a vacation.

Retired Chicago firefighter Kirby Collins, 58, said he would use winnings to "travel, share with my friends and family, help out, you know, needy people. You know, just do the right thing with it. I don't want to just blow it."

The drawing is set for 11 p.m. EST Tuesday but it usually takes a couple hours before it's clear if there is a winner.

Mega Millions is played in 45 states as well as Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Store in Luck, Wisconsin, sells winning \$15M lottery ticket

MADISON, Wis. (AP)—The city of Luck, Wisconsin, is living up to its namesake.

WISN-TV reported Thursday that someone bought a \$15.1 million Megabucks-winning ticket at Wayne's Food Plus grocery store in the northwestern Wisconsin city.

The winning numbers

were 4-6-12-17-27-28. It's the largest Megabucks jackpot won since a \$22.2 million jackpot in 2015.

Wayne's Food Plus store manager Paul Wondra says the ticket buyer "truly got lucky in Luck."

The Wisconsin-only game has drawings on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Life & Style

Prince Harry's memoir opens at a record-setting sales pace

NEW YORK (AP)—No, the public has not tired of hearing about Prince Harry. Sales for “Spare” have placed the Duke of Sussex in some rarefied company.

Penguin Random House announced Wednesday that first day sales for the Harry's tell-all memoir topped 1.4 million copies, a record pace for non-fiction from a company that also publishes Barack and Michelle Obama, whose “Becoming” needed a week to reach 1.4 million when it was released in 2018.

The sales figures for “Spare” include hardcover, audiobook and e-book editions sold in the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom.

“‘Spare’ is the story of someone we may have thought we already knew, but now we can truly come to understand Prince Harry through his own words,” Gina Centrello, President and Publisher of the Random



Copies of the new book by Prince Harry called “Spare” are displayed at Sherman's book store in Freeport, Maine, Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2023.

House Group, said in a statement.

“Looking at these extraordinary first day sales, readers clearly agree, ‘Spare’ is

a book that demands to be read, and it is a book we are proud to publish.”

One of the most highly anticipated memoirs in re-

cent times, “Spare” is Harry's highly personal and intimate account of his life in the royal family and his relationship with the Amer-

ican actor Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex.

Michelle Obama's memoir has since sold more than 15 million copies worldwide, its sales holding up over time in part because of highly favorable reviews. The verdict is mixed so far for “Spare.”

New York Times critic Alexandra Jacob called the book, and its author, “all

over the map—emotionally as well as physically,” at times “frank and funny” and at other times consumed by Harry's anger at the British press. In The Washington Post, Louis Bayard found “Spare” to be “good-natured, rancorous, humorous, self-righteous, self-deprecating, long-winded. And every so often, bewildering.”

Guitar god Jeff Beck dies, 78

NEW YORK

(AP)—Jeff Beck, a guitar virtuoso who pushed the boundaries of blues, jazz and rock ‘n’ roll, influencing generations of shredders along the way and becoming known as the guitar player's guitar player, has died. He was 78.



Beck

the lead guitarist of Aerosmith, told The New York Times in 2010. “He is head, hands and feet above all the rest of us, with the kind of talent that appears only once every generation or two.”

Beck was among the rock-guitarist pantheon from the

late ‘60s that included Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. Beck won eight Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice—once with the Yardbirds in 1992 and again as a solo artist in 2009. He was ranked fifth in Rolling Stone magazine's list of the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.”

“Jeff was such a nice person and an outstanding iconic, genius guitar player—there will never be another Jeff Beck,” Tony Iommi, guitarist for Black Sabbath wrote on Twitter among the many tributes.

Beck first came to prominence as a member of the Yardbirds and then went out on his own in a solo career that incorporated hard rock, jazz, funky blues and even opera. He was known for his improvising, love of harmonics and the whammy bar on his preferred guitar, the Fender Stratocaster.

“Jeff Beck is the best guitar player on the planet,” Joe Perry,

late ‘60s that included Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. Beck won eight Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice—once with the Yardbirds in 1992 and again as a solo artist in 2009. He was ranked fifth in Rolling Stone magazine's list of the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.”

“Jeff could channel music from the ethereal,” Page tweeted Wednesday.

Beck played guitar with vocalists as varied as Luciano Pavarotti, Macy Gray, Chrissie Hynde, Joss Stone, Imelda May, Cyndi Lauper, Wynonna Judd, Buddy Guy and Johnny Depp. He made two records with Rod Stewart—1968's “Truth” and 1969's “Beck-Ola”—and one with a 64-piece orchestra, “Emotion & Commotion.”

SAG Awards nominate ‘Banshees,’ ‘Everything’ and Zendaya

NEW YORK (AP)—In nominations to its 29th annual awards, the Screen Actors Guild heaped honors on the casts of the anarchic indie hit “Everything Everywhere All at Once” and the Irish tragicomedy “The Banshees of Inisherin,” while throwing some curve balls into the Oscar race.

The awards contenders, voted on by the Hollywood actors' guild SAG-AFTRA, were announced Wednesday on Instagram Live by Haley Lu Richardson (“The White Lotus”) and Ashley Park (“Emily in Paris”). The nominees for the guild's top award, best ensemble, are: “Babylon,” “The Banshees of Inisherin,” “Ev-

erything Everywhere All at Once,” “The Fabelmans” and “Women Talking.”

The SAG Awards are considered one of the most reliable Oscar bellwethers. Seldom does a movie or performance not nominated by the screen actors end up winning at the Academy Awards. Actors make up the biggest percentage of the film academy, so their choices have the largest sway.

Missing out on a SAG ensemble nomination usually means a film's best-picture hopes are over. Last year, all the top SAG winners—the cast of “CODA,” Will Smith, Jessica Chastain, Troy Kot-

sur and Ariana DeBose—all repeated their wins at the Oscars.

That means the road ahead for either of the year's top box-office hits—“Top Gun: Maverick” and “Avatar: The Way of Water”—just got a lot harder. After striking out with the actors guild, neither is likely to win best picture. Each film picked a nod from SAG for its stunt ensemble.

Coming off their wins at the Golden Globes on Tuesday night, Steven Spielberg's “The Fabelmans” and Martin McDonagh's “The Banshees of Inisherin” (a co-leading five SAG nods) increasingly look like this year's frontrun-

ners, along with Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's “Everything Everywhere All at Once” (also five SAG nominations).

The directors to those three films all landed nominations from the Directors Guild Awards on Wednesday, along with Todd Field (“Tár”) and Joseph Kosinski (“Top Gun: Maverick”). A DGA nod usually corresponds with an Oscar directing nomination. It also suggests those five films are safely in as best-picture nominees. Since the best-picture category expanded in 2009, only one DGA-nominated film hasn't also landed a best-picture nod.

Woman wants her abusive mother-in-law kept away

DEAR ABBY: I used to have a great relationship with my mother-in-law. I considered her one of my best friends, until her severe drug and alcohol abuse began to ruin her life. Her mental health issues came out in full force, and her lashing out reached a peak shortly before I married her son. After a barrage of nasty messages, she was no longer welcome at our wedding. I have blocked her from contacting me. She occasionally reaches out to my husband to talk only about herself.

We are thinking about starting a family in the next few years, and I'm terrified of her having access to our child. Do we have an obligation to let her meet our child, or even let her know one exists? She was a terrible mother to my husband (the authorities had to step in, and she was incarcerated) and she relinquished rights to her other child. This screams to me that she shouldn't have access to any grandchildren.

After she verbally attacked me, I don't even want her to know if I become pregnant. My husband isn't completely on board with keeping her in the dark, but he agreed not to tell her anything without us being on the same page. He is a thoughtful husband, but feels bad about being asked to keep such a big secret. I'm filled with anxiety about her even knowing about a baby. I would greatly appreciate your advice.

ANXIOUS IN WISCONSIN

DEAR ANXIOUS: When someone becomes pregnant, they do better with as little stress in their lives as possible. While I admire your husband's compassion for his volatile, unstable and abusive mother, he needs to accept that involving her in this chapter of your family life might not be the best decision for you or his child. If you can't get through to him, enlist the help of your doctor and someone with expertise in child development to help him understand that everyone will be healthier if she remains out of the picture. She may find out eventually, but you will be safe in the short term.

◆◆◆◆

DEAR ABBY: I host an annual party for many longtime friends. Some of them bring their (small) dogs, and that's OK. My problem is, one friend brings their giant dog. The last time “Brutus” was here, it was seen snatching food off the kitchen counter and the dining table. I love this friend, but I don't love that dog in my kitchen and dining room.

Normally I would just say, “Please don't bring Brutus,” but I can't. My friend is now blind and says Brutus is their Seeing Eye dog. (Brutus doesn't act like any Seeing Eye dog I've ever seen. He's very undisciplined.) I'm at a loss about what to do or say. Do you have any advice for me?

AWKWARD IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



DEAR AWKWARD: Yes. Service dogs wear a harness or a vest. They also are trained not to leave their owner's side. They never behave the way Brutus has, so it's safe to assume this person may have been less than honest with you about their own status, as well as their dog's. My advice is to omit this person off your guest list, and if you are asked why, be truthful.

◆◆◆◆

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in “The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It.” To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

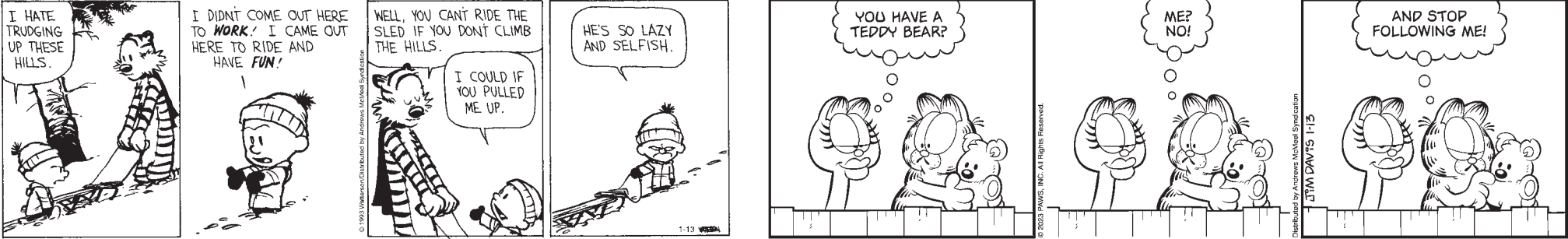
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

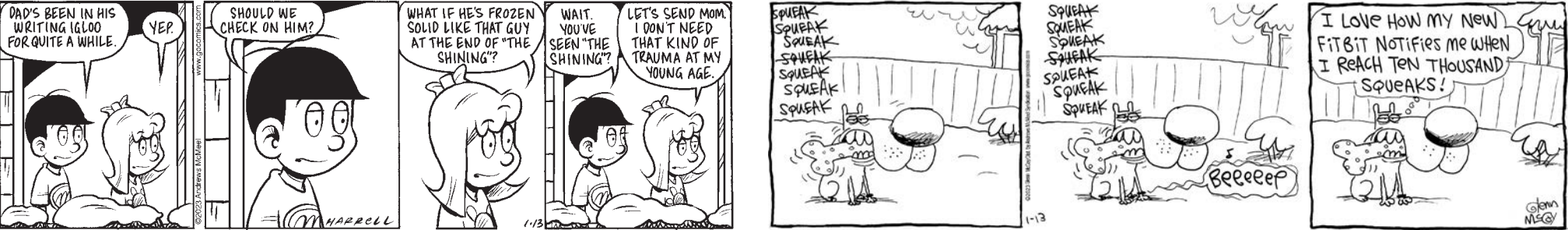


Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Showy parrot
- 6 Lith., once
- 9 Pooch
- 12 "The Devil Wears —"
- 13 Tic-tac-toe win
- 14 Mess up
- 15 Macho types
- 16 Name of B.B. King's guitar
- 18 Like some pools
- 20 Amorphous mass
- 21 ISP option
- 23 Expert
- 24 Diplomat
- 25 Tex. neighbor
- 27 Fess up
- 29 "Night" author
- 31 Prolific inventor
- 35 Entangle
- 37 Prefix with conference

DOWN

- 1 Speedometer stat
- 2 Exist
- 3 Composer
- 4 Mideast gulf
- 5 Comedian
- 6 Flew alone
- 7 Tart
- 8 Sinbad's bird
- 9 Actress
- 10 Acrylic fiber
- 11 Loon's cousin
- 17 "No need to explain!"
- 19 Florida city
- 21 Part of DJIA
- 22 Enjoy
- 24 Carried out
- 26 Home of St. Francis
- 28 Peach
- 30 SASE, e.g.
- 32 Figaro's home
- 33 Flamenco cheer
- 34 Mosquito barrier
- 36 Indy autos
- 38 Drudges
- 39 Places in the heart
- 40 Orange variety
- 42 Called a strike?
- 45 Thick chunk
- 46 North —
- 48 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
- 50 Melody
- 51 R&B singer
- Des—

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 1-13

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Liam Hemsworth, 33; Orlando Bloom, 46; Patrick Dempsey, 57; Julia Louis-Dreyfus, 62.

Happy Birthday: Control will ease stress. If inconsistency takes over, replace your plans with something that offers stability. Situations change. You'll fall behind if you don't adjust to fit in with the times. Being organized will help you meet the demands you face. Good things are within reach, but being in the right place mentally, physically and financially to take advantage of the opportunities is essential. Your numbers are 4, 8, 21, 29, 32, 36, 43.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Create a peaceful environment. Don't let chaos infiltrate your life. Strive for simplicity, honest conversations and flawless work. Know when to walk away from situations that are based on misinformation, exaggeration or overindulgence. Put negativity and bad decisions behind you. ★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Have confidence in yourself and your ability to figure things out. Don't let someone talk you into something that isn't right for you. Exterior motives are present; be clear regarding what you expect and are willing to give in return. ★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): A positive shift will require you to have everything in place and ready to go. Things are starting to look good. Opportunities combined with your creative ideas will lead to positive results. A networking event will result in a chance meeting. ★★★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You'll face opposition while trying to resolve an emotional issue. Be conscious of what

others want and how they feel before you pitch what you have to offer. Understanding what's important to others will help you get what you want in return. ★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): A perfect display of what you can offer will win favors. Attend an event geared toward what's important to you. Establish yourself in a community of people heading down a similar path; success will be yours. Love is on the rise. ★★★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): If you don't like what you see, reinvent yourself. The more detail, the better the impression. Someone you respect will stand by you, even if those closest to you don't. Change is favored and will help you further your interests. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Play to win, but not at the expense of hurting someone you love. Put friends and family first, but make calculated moves when it comes to business. Don't mix business with pleasure. Negotiate like a pro, and celebrate with the ones you love. ★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Stop procrastinating. Shape your future with what you have to offer. Don't be shy; embrace the unknown and face challenges head-on. Use your intellect, experience and common sense to cut corners. Talk to organizations or institutions that can make your plans more accessible. ★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Your ability to captivate your audience will boost your ego, but don't let that push you to stretch the truth or promise more than you can deliver. Stick to the truth and map out a plan that's helpful and easy to understand. ★★★★★

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Do everything according to plan, and don't leave yourself open to criticism. A joint venture or shared expense will escalate a situation that needs a face-lift. Offer positive solutions and incentives to avoid a stalemate or loss. Balance and equality are required. ★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Take a greater interest in investing in yourself, and you will find a window of opportunity coming your way. An energetic approach to home improvements, making money and loving the one you are with will pay off. Make health and romance your priorities. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Don't share too much information. Being a good listener will give you the advantage when it comes to getting your way. Offering your services to a collective group will give you a place to grow your ideas and execute your plans. ★★

Birthday Baby: You are wise, astute and calculating. You are a perfectionist and a challenger.

★: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★★: Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
15					16			17		
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55			56			57				

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	8			7				
		2			4		3	
	1		8	2		7		
9			4		3	6		
		1			7			
		6	7		2			5
	9			8	1		4	
4		8				2		
			2			3		

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

1/13

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

9	2	5	3	7	1	4	6	8
7	3	8	2	6	4	5	9	1
4	1	6	9	5	8	7	2	3
5	7	2	1	4	6	3	8	9
1	9	3	5	8	2	6	7	4
6	8	4	7	3	9	1	5	2
2	6	7	8	1	3	9	4	5
3	5	9	4	2	7	8	1	6
8	4	1	6	9	5	2	3	7

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/2

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SIKH WEDDING GOWNS

Solution: 6 letters

M A S T N A D N E P N O S E T
S A T E L E G A N C E S J H E
A L G T R Y S L R A E P R G T
I T A E O E D Y C R H E N N A
S R V U N C S N D H A G O I C
H O B A T T A P U D O O K D I
C U R Y L A I E R S G R L N A R
U S I L V E I F R F R A R D I E T
F E D R G A E I M E W U P B N
C R E N A S E S N A T H B L I
U H A N D S E H U G S A B I V
N H O E C O A T S O L I O E O
C S R O O R N A T E L R L V R
L S C A R F T I K K A B D K Y
E S E E R A S L E H E N G A S

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1/13

Beading, Blouse, Bold, Bride, Burgundy, Change, Choli, Chooa, Coats, Covered, Crystal, Dress, Dupatta, Elegance, Fishtail, Fuchsia, Gold, Hair, Hands, Heavy, Henna, Intricate, Ivory, Lehenga, Magenta, Maroon, Nath, Nose, Ornate, Pearls, Pendants, Pink, Reds, Ring, Rituals, Sarees, Sari, Scarf, Silks, Terra Cotta, Threads, Tikka, Trouser, Uncle, Veil

Yesterday's Answer: Montana

To purchase WONDERWORD books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Jaylen Brown scores season-high 41 points, Celtics win



BOSTON (AP)—The numbers that Celtics stars Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum have been putting up this season point to a duo playing even better than last season when Boston reached the NBA Finals.

Brown believes there's another level they can reach. Their latest performance might have been a peek of that next plateau.

Brown scored a season-high 41 points and had 12 rebounds and the Celtics won their fourth straight game, holding off the New Orleans Pelicans 125-114 on Wednesday night.

Tatum added 31 points and 10 rebounds. It was the fifth career 40-point game for Brown. It was the 10th time in their careers Brown and Tatum have combined for 70 or more points.

"I don't think this is the best you will see," Brown said. "I definitely think we've got other limits to reach in the future, in our career. This is just part of the process."

Boston interim coach Joe Mazzulla believes Tatum and Brown are putting the lessons learned from last season's shortcomings to use.

"To get to that point in your career when you know you need each other and you know you need your teammates—it's a very powerful thing," Mazzulla said.

Malcolm Brogdon added 20 points, and Al Horford had 14, making four 3-pointers. The Celtics have won their last five home games.



Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) drives to the basket past New Orleans Pelicans guard Dyson Daniels (11) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in Boston.

Horford said the growth Brown and Tatum had made even since last season is bleeding into every aspect of the team's dynamic on the floor.

"They continue to grow in front of our eyes," Horford said. "What we did last year and what they did last year leading us to the Finals, it shows a lot of growth on their end... Now I feel like they're just playing basketball, trying to lead us."

Boston will take an NBA-best 30-12 record to Brooklyn Thursday night to face a Nets team that has the East's second-best record at 27-13.

CJ McCollum had 38 points for New Orleans, his fifth consecutive game with at least 25 points.

"He's gotten himself going. It's incredible to see how consistent he is," Pelicans coach Willie Green said. "Unfortunately we just came up short tonight."

He kept the Pelicans in the game throughout, going 6 of 12 from the 3-point line. They played without Zion Williamson for the fifth consecutive game as he continues to deal with a strained right hamstring.

Naji Marshall added 18 points and Trey Murphy III had 15 for New Orleans. The Pelicans have lost three of four.

The Celtics took a six-point lead into halftime and increased it to 104-89 with just under 10 minutes to play.

New Orleans got to 107-97 with 7:32 left. But Boston responded with a 11-3 run to get it back to 118-100.

Brogdon said there's no question the Celtics are being led by a two-pronged set of stars.

"We got a juggernaut in JT but we got another one in JB," he said.

Nuggets 126, Suns 97

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 21 points, 18 rebounds and nine assists before sitting out the fourth quarter and Denver won its 12th straight home game, routing weary and short-handed Phoenix.

Bones Hyland added 21 points and Jamal Murray

had 16 to help the Nuggets win for the 14th time in 17 games. They reached the season's halfway point tied with Memphis for the Western Conference lead.

A night after winning at Golden State despite missing four starters and six rotation players, the Suns ran out of gas playing a back-to-back at altitude while dressing 10 players. Torrey Craig scored 16 points and Josh Okogie added 14 and nine rebounds for the Suns. They've lost 10 of 12.

Grizzlies 135, Spurs 129

In Memphis, Tenn., Ja Morant scored 38 points, Jaren Jackson added 21 points and 12 rebounds and Memphis beat San Antonio for its season-high eighth straight victory.

Morant, who missed the previous two games with right thigh soreness, was 14 of 25 from the field, including 3 for 5 from outside the arc. Desmond Bane finished with 18 points and Tyus Jones added 16.

Keldon Johnson, who missed the past two games with left hamstring tightness, led the Spurs with 24 points. Tre Jones had 22 points and six assists.

Bucks 114, Hawks 105

In Atlanta, Jrue Holiday scored 27 points, Brook Lopez had 20 points and 12 rebounds and Milwaukee held off Atlanta.

Giannis Antetokounmpo added seven points, 18 rebounds and 10 assists, and Bobby Portis II had 13 points and 10 rebounds. Milwaukee has won four of five.

Atlanta played without Trae Young (illness) and Clint Capela (strained right calf). Bogdan Bogdanovic led the Hawks with 22 points.

Wizards 10, Bulls 97

In Washington, Kyle Kuzma broke a tie with a 3-pointer with 5.7 seconds left and Washington beat Chicago.

Zach LaVine missed a 16-footer for Chicago with 2.3 seconds left, with Deni Avdija grabbing the last of his career-high 20 rebounds for Washington. Earlier, LaVine beat the shot clock to tie it at 97.

Kuzma finished with 21 points.

LaVine had 38 points for Chicago. Bulls scoring leader DeMar DeRozan missed his first game of the season because of quadriceps strain.

Knicks 119, Pacers 113

In New York, Jaylen Brunson scored 34 points to help New York beat Indiana.

RJ Barrett added 27 points in his return from a finger injury that sidelined him six games, and Julius Randle had 14 points and 16 rebounds.

Buddy Hield led Indiana with 31 points.

Kings 135, Rockets 115

In Sacramento, Calif., Domantas Sabonis had 25 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists and Sacramento beat skidding Houston.

De'Aaron Fox added 24 points and nine assists for Sacramento.

Houston's Alperen Sengun became the youngest center in NBA history with a triple-double, with the 20-year-old finishing with 10 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. Jalen Green led the Rockets with 26 points. They have lost eight in a row and 13 of 14.

Pistons 135, Timberwolves 118

In Detroit, Saddiq Bey scored 31 points and Detroit rallied to beat Minnesota.

Bojan Bogdanovic added 27 points for the short-handed Pistons.

Anthony Edwards scored 20 points for Minnesota. D'Angelo Russell added 19 and Rudy Gobert had 16 points and 14 rebounds.

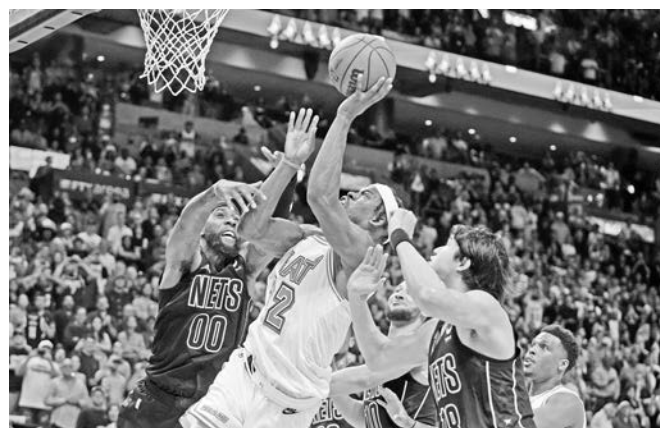
Heat still believing a 2nd-half run is possible this season

MIAMI (AP)—The starting lineup changes almost daily. The leading scorer has various aches and pains, the leading rebounder has a bad wrist, the assist leader is dealing with knee soreness and the team's 3-point record-holder is wearing a cast on his shooting hand.

Plus, almost every game comes down to the final moments. And most recently, the best night of free-throw shooting in NBA history was what was required to pull out a one-point win.

There's still a belief within the Miami Heat — a team that had the best record in the Eastern Conference last season — that a deep playoff run is possible. But with a 22-20 record one game into the season's second half, and stuck in the No. 8 spot in the East, the Heat also know that it's time to start putting wins together.

"It's the start of the second season," coach Erik Spoelstra said Tuesday after a 112-111 win over Oklahoma City. "I feel something. I think the locker room feels something.



Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler (22) attempts a shot during final seconds of the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Brooklyn Nets, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023, in Miami.

But we also have to prove it. We know that. A lot of it just ends up being talk at this point. But we feel encouraged. Even with all the moving parts and injuries and missed games, we feel like something is happening."

It's been one step forward, one step back all season for the Heat. They had a season-best four-game winning streak in December, a season-worst four-game losing streak in November. They didn't get to the

.500 mark for the first time until the 30th game and their current spot — two games over .500 — matches their best of the season.

They're up to 18 different starting lineups this season, seven in their last nine games. Jimmy Butler leads Miami in scoring; he has missed time with a knee injury and had an aching wrist on Tuesday, when the Heat went an NBA-record 40 for 40 from the foul line, with Butler making 23 of

those shots.

"I think that's what I signed up for, to be able to play at a high level no matter who we have alongside each other," Butler said. "I don't have the hard job. Spo does. He's got try to mix and match guys, make guys feel comfortable while trying to tell them where to be on the floor, and how to run what play, when to run what play. It's a lot going on."

Bam Adebayo missed the game with a bad wrist, Kyle Lowry with a balky knee, Tyler Herro with a sore Achilles and Caleb Martin with a quadriceps strain. Ordinarily, all four would start. There's hope that at least some of them will be back Thursday when Miami starts a two-game home series with the Milwaukee Bucks, with the second match-up set for Saturday.

Other Heat players won't be back for a while, if at all. Duncan Robinson, the 3-point record holder in Heat franchise history, had surgery on his right hand. Rookie Nikola Jovic is dealing with a back

issue. Backup center Omer Yurtseven had ankle surgery and hasn't played this season.

And the season already has been a grind. Of the first 42 games, 29 have been classified by the NBA as "clutch" — defined as any game within five points with 5 minutes or less remaining. The Heat are 16-13 in those games, 9-6 in games decided by three points or fewer. There isn't much margin for error, in large part because Miami's 108.8 points-per-game average is lowest in the NBA.

"I like that feeling going into a locker room, when you feel a team starting to come together from the adversity," Spoelstra said. "You wish every team would come together like that. It doesn't always work that way. The last three weeks, you feel like this group has gotten closer. I think everybody's kind of refreshed even though everybody's kind of exhausted. There's a feeling that in the second half of the season, we can do something special."

Going home: Bills' Hamlin released from Buffalo hospital

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (A P) — The “Prayers for Damar 3” have been answered. Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin is finally home.

Nine days after he stunned and saddened his teammates by going into cardiac arrest and being resuscitated on the field in Cincinnati, and placed the NFL on hold, Hamlin was released from a Buffalo hospital on Wednesday, the Bills announced.

“We have completed a series of tests and evaluation and in consultation with the team physicians, we are confident that Damar can be safely discharged,” Dr. Jamie Nadler said in a news release issued by the team.

This marks the next major step in what doctors have called Hamlin’s remarkable recovery, which came two days after he was deemed healthy enough to be transferred from the University of Cincinnati Medical Center to the Buffalo General Medical Center. Nadler said the 24-year-old Hamlin will continue his rehabilitation with the Bills.

The Bills and Nadler did not disclose the results of the tests Hamlin had over the past two days in Buffalo to determine the reason his heart stopped after he struck squarely in the chest by Bengals receiver Tee Higgins while making what appeared to be a routine tack-



Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin smiles prior to the start of the first half of a preseason NFL football game, Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

le. Hamlin collapsed during the first quarter of Buffalo’s since-canceled game at Cincinnati on Jan. 2, a chilling scene that played out in front of millions on television.

“That just shows the type of kid that he is, how he’s fought and he’s continuing to win,” Bills left tackle Dion Dawkins said. “There’s no place that he would rather be than in his own bed, so blessing to him.”

As Hamlin’s recovery pro-

gressed, the Bills and the NFL’s messaging switched from “Prayers for Damar 3” to “Love for Damar 3” by last weekend, when the entire league honored Hamlin, who wears No. 3. The Bills and their fans capped an emotionally draining week with a 35-23 regular-season-ending victory over New England.

“It’s an awesome feeling. And we’re just hoping that he’s getting his rest and recov-

ery,” quarterback Josh Allen said Wednesday after practice, where the Bills (13-3) prepared to host their division rival Miami Dolphins (9-8) in a wild-card playoff game on Sunday. “As a team, we’re extremely happy.”

As much as players want to see Hamlin in person, Allen cautioned that moment might have to wait to allow Hamlin to gain his strength.

“Just making sure he’s tak-

ing it slow, and obviously trying to get back to being himself,” Allen added. “So we’ll take all the time that we need. But I hope he knows the guys are ready to see him.”

Coach Sean McDermott said it would be up to Hamlin to decide when to visit the team, saying: “We’ll welcome him back as he feels ready.”

Hamlin spent his first two days in hospital under sedation and showed no signs of

neurological damage upon being awakened on Jan. 4. By Friday, he was breathing on his own and walking and appeared by videoconference in a team meeting, where he informed the Bills, “Love you boys.”

On Sunday, Hamlin was live-tweeting during the Bills’ victory, with doctors joking he tripped numerous alarms around the intensive care unit while watching teammate Nyheim Hines return the opening kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown.

Following his transfer to Buffalo, Hamlin posted a note on Twitter that read: “Special thank-you to Buffalo General it’s been nothing but love since arrival!” while asking his followers to keep him in their prayers.

His doctors said Hamlin’s progress in recovering from cardiac arrest, considered a life-threatening event, has been normal to accelerated.

In the days that followed, \$8.6 million in GoFundMe donations poured into Hamlin’s toy drive fundraiser, which will be used to support young people through education and sports.

Hamlin, who is from the Pittsburgh suburb of McKees Rock, also will use proceeds from the sale of new T-shirts, emblazoned with “Did We Win?” along with his hands in the shape of a heart, to raise money for the trauma center in Cincinnati that initially treated him.

Record 5 1st-year coaches lead teams into NFL postseason

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

Coaching changes paid off in a big way for several NFL teams this season.

From impressive turnarounds for Jacksonville and the New York Giants to big boosts for Minnesota and Miami, a record-setting five of the 10 teams that hired new coaches for the 2022 season made the playoffs.

Doug Pederson led the Jaguars on a worst-to-first flip in the AFC South, Brian Daboll helped the Giants go from last place to a wild-card berth, Kevin O’Connell took Minnesota from a losing record to 13 wins and an NFC North title, Mike McDaniel got Miami to its first playoff berth since 2016 and Todd Bowles helped Tampa Bay repeat as division champs for the first time in franchise history.

That broke the previous record of four coaches getting to the postseason in their first season with a team, which was set in 1997 when Jim Fassel (Giants), Pete Carroll (Patriots), Bobby Ross (Lions) and Steve

Mariucci (49ers) did it.

There were a record-tying 10 coaching changes last season and not all of the newcomers had success, with Denver firing Nathaniel Hackett last month and Houston firing Lovie Smith on Sunday night.

Chicago’s Matt Eberflus finished with the worst record in the NFL, Josh McDaniels turned a 10-win playoff team in Las Vegas into a 6-11 team and the Saints had double-digit losses for the first time since 2005 in their first year under Dennis Allen.

The most impressive turnaround came in Jacksonville, where Pederson helped the Jaguars become the first team since the 2008 Dolphins to win their division the season after posting the league’s worst record.

Daboll’s work helped the Giants go from 4-13 to 9-7-1 despite a flawed roster hurt by a staggering \$54.8 million in dead money on the salary cap to get to the postseason for the first time since 2016.

Bowles struggled a bit more as Tampa Bay won just eight

games to become the fourth division winner in NFL history with a losing record. Two of the previous three — the 2010 Seahawks (7-9) and 2014 Panthers (7-8-10) — won a playoff game, while Washington (7-9) lost to the Bucs in the 2020 playoffs.

The Texans are looking for a new coach again after rare, back-to-back seasons of one-year coaching tenures. Houston fired David Culley after the 2021 season and Smith this season.

The only other team since the merger to do that was the 49ers, who had three coaches in a row last a year or less from 1976-78 in Monte Clark, Ken Meyer and Pete McCulley, and did it again in 2015-16 with Jim Tomsula and Chip Kelly.

REMATCH WEEKEND

All six games on wild-card weekend are rematches from the regular season, including three matchups of division foes, with Baltimore playing Cincinnati, Miami visiting Buffalo and San Francisco

hosting Seattle.

Two of those three matchups ended in splits in the regular season, with the Ravens-Bengals and Dolphins-Bills splitting their two games.

The 49ers swept the Seahawks but know how little that matters after losing to the Rams in the NFC title game last season following two regular-season wins.

In the Super Bowl era, teams that swept an opponent in the regular season are 14-10 in a playoff rematch, including 13-6 when the game is at home, like it is for the 49ers on Saturday.

In the other rematches, the Chargers are seeking to avenge a Week 3 loss to Jacksonville, the Giants are looking to do the same after losing to the Vikings in Week 16 and the Cowboys are trying to do it after losing in Week 1 to Tampa Bay.

This is the fifth time since the merger that every game in the opening round of the playoffs is a rematch from the regular season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. It happened on four-game wild-card

weekends in 2009, 2004, 1994 and 1992.

STREAKING

The Niners are headed into the postseason on a quite a roll, having won the last 10 games of the regular season, with Jimmy Garoppolo starting the first five games and Brock Purdy the last five.

The last team to have two QBs with consecutive five-game winning streaks were the perfect Dolphins in 1972 with Bob Griese and Earl Morrall.

San Francisco is the 13th team in the Super Bowl era to end the regular season on a winning streak of at least 10 games.

The results of the previous 12 haven’t been overly impressive, with only three winning the Super Bowl: the 1972 Dolphins, 1976 Raiders and 2003 Patriots.

Two others got to the Super Bowl before losing, with the 1967 Raiders and 2007 Patriots falling in the final game.

Five of the teams lost their first playoff game: the 2019 Ravens, 2012 Broncos, 2009 Chargers, 2006 Chargers and

1993 Oilers.

Kansas City won a wild-card game in 2015 before losing in the division round and Pittsburgh won the division round game in 2004 before losing in the AFC title game.

HAPPY RETURNS

Nyheim Hines’ emotional kick return TDs for Buffalo on Sunday were historic as well.

Hines became the first Bills player to return the opening kick for a TD since Terrence McGee did it against Miami and added another later in the game to become the first player with two kick return TDs in a game since Leon Washington did it for Seattle in 2010.

Hines was also the last player with two punt-return touchdowns in the same game, doing it in 2019 for the Colts, and he became the first player to have a game with at least with at least two kickoff-return touchdowns and one with at least two punt-return touchdowns in his career.

The returns gave the NFL nine combined punt and kick return TDs — the second fewest in the Super Bowl era to the seven in the nine-game, strike-shortened 1982 season.

JTM Saipan keeps Al-Ger Manpower winless



MARK RABAGO

JTM Saipan's Ryan Bayna, seen here in a file photo, scored 20 points against Al-Ger Manpower in open division of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League last Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

By **MARK RABAGO**
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR



JTM Saipan continues to be in play for one of the Top 2 seeds in the open division of the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League after routing Al-Ger Manpower, 99-74, last Sunday at the Koblerville Basketball Court.

The lopsided win was the sixth in seven games for JTM Saipan as it tied Chang Ming Market in second place. Still in the lead is Blue Haus with its unblemished 7-0 win-loss card.

JTM Saipan lorded it over Al-Ger Manpower early and often as it quickly established a double-digit lead in the opening quarter and never looked back.

After leading by 10 in the first canto, JTM Saipan

would balloon its lead to 12 points, 36-24, at the half before blowing Ager Manpower to kingdom come in the third, 72-51, then cruised to the 25-point win.

Ryan Bayna and Jonel Broncona scored 20 points apiece to lead JTM Saipan in the victory, while Joseph Torres added 19 markers for good measure.

"Smoking" Jun Tabora was again brilliant in defeat as the scoring machine scored a sea-

son-high 40 points in the loss, which was Al-Ger Manpower's seventh in as many tries.

In other games last Sunday, Blue Haus continued its march toward perfection after thumping Pepoy's Cafe, 119-82. It was the sixth loss in seven games for the latter.

Chang Ming Market, meanwhile, posted the aforementioned sixth victory with a masterful 88-53 win over Marianas Health Services, which dropped to 3-4.

NAPA Auto Parts escaped by the skin of its teeth, 86-84, against Pacific Best Choice to improve to 4-3, while dealing its foe a fourth loss against three wins.

Also hiking its record to 3-4 is Padrinos Tuesday Club following its 96-82 beating of Vizion Insurance, which dropped to 2-5.

JTM Saipan 99 – Bayna 20, Jone. Broncano 20, Torres 19, Pineda 9, Nuguid 8, Ruiz 7, Garcia 6, Rodriguez 6, Jona. Broncano 1.

Al-Ger Manpower 74 – Tabora 40, Mustajo 9, Mariano 6, Taraya 6, L. Itaas 6, Cuna 4, J. Itaas 3.

Scoring by quarters: 26-16, 46-34, 72-51, 99-74.

Baseball is back in March

By **LEIGH GASES**
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REPORTER

The Saipan Baseball League season is slated to begin in March 2023, with a meeting discussing the season scheduled for Jan. 18 at the Northern Marianas Sports Association conference room at 6pm inside the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

SBL president Jay Santos is calling all prospective team managers and coaches to discuss those interested in participating, planning, and scheduling of the season.

For more information on the meeting, contact Shine Tenorio at (670) 483-1141.

Baseball on Saipan was first put to a standstill after the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018 destroyed the Francisco "Tan Ko" M. Palacios Baseball Field. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prolonged

the cancellation of competition to four years.

The last SBL championship team went to the Chalan Kanoa Bears in 2018 after their Game 1 win against Go See Mark. They were unable to complete their best-of-five championship series after Yutu hit.

The Tan Ko Baseball Field was finally repaired just in the nick of time for the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June, with the NMI National Baseball Team striking gold after defeating rival team Guam in the championship game.

After the Mini Games, the CNMI U18 Junior National Baseball Team utilized the Tan Ko Baseball Field for their practices. They were scheduled to play in the World Baseball Softball Confederation Oceania qualifying tournament from Dec. 12 to 15 but it was canceled.



1 MAN

From Page 24

is not the case. People who retired their streak, I have no idea how they did it. Trying to stop after the first 365 days is like telling a drug addict to quit his addiction."

After the five-year streak threshold, Dela Cruz said that his inspiration to go further is Jon Sutherland, a 72-year-old Utah resident who currently has the active and longest running streak of 19,589 days, or 53.6 years.

What kept Dela Cruz running is not only the weight loss benefit, but most importantly, the positive impact it had on his mental health. "I realized it was amazing for my mental health—more effective

than weight loss benefits. You can never outrun a bad diet. So whoever will start this for weight loss, you'll need more than just running everyday to cut weight. For people needing help I would recommend this to help them exponentially."

Over the course of six years, life happens, and with it, challenges, setbacks, and trials. But they were nothing that Dela Cruz couldn't handle. "Years 3 and 4, I did hit the mental block thinking how easier my life would be to stop it. Regular setbacks like traveling, typhoons, sickness weren't an issue anymore. I guess the hardest physically now would be quarantined for COVID-19."

Dela Cruz recalled before he contracted COVID-19, he created a back-up plan to run

inside his small apartment. He said that his GPS couldn't accurately track mileage distance under a concrete roof so he ran a mile at the track and kept a record of how many steps it took to get a mile. "I logged around 2,300 steps to hit a mile... so when I was isolated indoors, I just ran until my step count hit 3,000 just to be safe, in case my stride length got shorter than what I ran on the track."

After hitting his sixth year, there's no slowing down for Dela Cruz. "I have committed to running for as long as my legs can take me. People don't know there is a ranking system in the streak runners registry. I told myself If I made it to Year 5 to rank up to 'Proficient,' I might as well make it to the big 50 for the highest rank of

'The Hills.' They have a rank for every five years a person completed their streak."

Dela Cruz then listed the streak runners in the CNMI, and said "Neophyte is the rank bestowed on everyone under 5 years of running everyday, so that would be Dr. Ron Snyder, Dr. Galvin DLG, Angel San Nicolas, J.C. Cadua, Simon Necesito, Ali Nelson, and Frank Nawaz."

Proficient is the rank for a five-year running streak; 10 to 14 is Experienced; 15 to 19 is Well Versed; 20 to 24 is Highly Skilled; 25 to 29 Dominators; 30 to 34 is Masters; 35 to 39 is Grand Masters; 40 to 44 is Legends; 45 to 49 is Coverts; and 50+ is The Hills. "That's the goal, to attain the coveted rank of running 50+ years. I just turned 25 years old when

I started the run streak, so I know 50 years would be on my 75th birthday and I don't think that'll be a problem."

Dela Cruz then thanked his wife, son, family, friends, and co-workers "for being so supportive of it now. Years ago, some were betting when I would quit or told me there was nothing to prove anymore. It's never been about proving anything. It just helps my mental health. It's at that point I will run a mile as sure as the sun will rise for the day."

"My advice for anyone doing a run streak for this year: Just do it. Pain will come and go. It's whether your conviction is strong enough to overcome in order to continue running a mile the next day. Have a pair of shorts and shoes in

your car to be able to run anytime anywhere. Whether it's before attending a wedding, funeral, party—or do it after. That's what I usually have to pull when I oversleep on important days. Just be ready to run anytime and anywhere. A good example was when my wife was going into labor, I went into the delivery with my running clothes underneath. After my son came out and they took him for check ups and they were going to wheel my wife to her hospital room, I stripped my outer clothes off and ran my mile in the hospital parking lot. The doctor said she was fine and that was my cue to bolt and run laps around [the Commonwealth Health Center]. Thankfully, my wife supports my streak," ended Dela Cruz.

FINALS

From Page 24

most of the heavy lifting for Dandan after finishing with 12 points, while the 13 markers of Kaia Travilla paced Kagman.

In the boys 18, a rematch of the final regular season game between top seed Koblerville

and second seed Gualo Rai is set after the two rivals beat their semifinal opponents in contrasting fashions.

Gualo Rai was the first to book a finals ticket after it withstood the challenge of No. 3 Kagman, 67-62, last Friday.

Craig Padayao was brilliant all game long as he led Gualo

Rai with 21 points. Leo Nara-ja was no chopped liver either as he contributed 20 points. Gino Rasg and Frankie Satur paced Kagman in their gallant stand with 19 points and 17 points, respectively.

Unlike their finals opponent, Koblerville coasted to a 53-38 victory over No. 4 Dandan last Saturday. Airson

Atan led a balanced attack by Koblerville with 12 points, while Kenny Lacquian fired 16 in the loss.

The three championship matches were originally set for this Saturday, but the leaking roof at the TSL Sports Complex venue postponed the finals to the following weekend.

TEACK

From Page 24

Edward C. Sablan (January), Frances M. Sablan (February), Nick C. Sablan (March), Larry I. Deleon Guerrero (April), Alex Tudela (May), Mariano Fajardo (June), Rick Kautz (July), Das Krishnan (August), Ed Manibusan (September),

and Tony Benavente (October) in the 2022 SGA Ace of the Month Tournament.

The SGA 2022 December Ace of the Month Tournament is scheduled this Sunday, Jan. 15. The Ace of Aces 2022 Tournament is tentatively proposed for Jan. 28 and 29 with the January Ace 2023 on Jan. 29, 2023.



Jaylen Brown
scores
season-high 41
points, Celtics win
PAGE 21

Saipan Tribune Sports

JTM Saipan keeps
Al-Ger Manpower
winless

PAGE 23



24 FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

1 man, 6 years and 5,610 miles

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Chasing after Jon Sutherland's running streak of 53.6 years is someone you may have seen regularly running the length of the Beach Road Pathway—Saipan's Edward Dela Cruz Jr.—who has just accomplished running six years or 2,190 days, and 5,610 miles of running at least one mile a day in the evening of last Wednesday, Jan. 11.

Run Saipan's president, surrounded by his close friends and club mates, ran 6 miles—1 mile per year that he has run consecutively—from the Beach Road Pathway across the Oleai track and field to the R&J Wine, Liquor, and Tobacco in Garapan and back.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune*, the 31-year-old said that accomplishing six miles felt nothing short of great, "but to be honest, I'm so deep into the running streak it's an everyday thing now. I look back now with what I have accomplished or contributed to the

running community during my streak tenure." In 2020, he created the only established premier running club in the CNMI, Run Saipan, with a growing number of members.

In the beginning of his run streak, Dela Cruz used to run the Beach Road Pathway religiously, finishing his 365th day on that route, but now, he runs anytime and anywhere he could get a run in.

The firefighter 2 of the Airport and Rescue and Fire-fighting for the Commonwealth Ports Authority said that initially, he started run-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr., center, poses with fellow Run Saipan members after finishing his sixth year or 2,190 days of running at least one mile a day last Wednesday.

ning for weight loss, and that his friend, Rep. T.J. Manglona (R-Saipan) forced him to start running. "I didn't intend to do a streak but it eventually came to that."

Then, his close friend, Ter-

ence Leung inspired him to run everyday. Dela Cruz said, "I remember him telling me how he got faster by running 2 miles everyday for 60 days. I made 1 mile (not 2) everyday for 60 days, then it grew

to 90. Then 100. Then 200. Then I thought maybe I can do 365. I never had any intention at the beginning for 365

days straight of running. I told myself I would retire in two years, but as you can see that

See 1 MAN on Page 23

Finals set in 3 division of Village Hoops

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

50 2022 MARIANAS VILLAGE CUP
The championship matches of the boys 13, women's, and boys 18 divisions of the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League were finally settled following the semifinals over the weekend at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Center.

In the boys 13, top seeds Kagman and Tanapag beat their respective opponents to advance to the championship.

No. 1 seed Kagman got an unexpected challenge from No. 4 seed Oleai before prevailing, 48-44, last Sunday. Liam Wilson paced the winners with 19 points, while the 12 points of Raffy Cai led Oleai.

Second seed Kagman, meanwhile, disposed of Finasisu, 51-44, last Friday



MARK RABAGO

Garapan's Marlene Lumabi drives to the hoop during their semis game against San Vicente in the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Center.

» But games postponed to next weekend

thanks to the 17 points of Dale Garcia who led the team. The game-high 22 points of Jairus Pangelinan almost brought Finasisu to the Promised Land.

In the women's division, second seed Garapan was the first to advance to the championship round following its 43-40 nipping of third seed San Vicente last Friday.

Marlene Lumabi led Garapan with 15 points, while Madeleine Alegre ably backed her up with 12 of her own. Destiny Pangelinan's 20 points was wasted in San Vicente's semifinal loss.

Top seed Dandan justified its lofty standing after eeking out a 36-32 win over fourth seed Kagman last Saturday.

Antonette Labausa did
See FINALS on Page 23

Teack is SGA November Ace

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Jung Eun Teack topped the Saipan Golfers Association November Ace of the Month Tournament held last Dec. 18 at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort west course.

Armed with a 16 handicap, Teack finished with a net score of 68 following a gross score of 84. He had a front nine of 43 and a back nine of 41.

CNMI Sports Hall of Famer Tony Benavente came in second with his net score of 70. The 6-handicapper had identical 38s in the first nine and last nine holes for a gross of 76.

Das Krishnan and Larry Deleon Guerrero were tied at third with net scores of 71 each. Krishnan got his 71 after a gross of 81 (40-41), while Deleon Guerrero had a 92 gross following a 42 and 50 in the front and back nines.

In the closest to the pin competition, Benavente was without peer in holes No. 3

and 17, while Mariano Fajardo won hole No. 13.

In the longest drive, Rick Kautz brought out the lumber in holes No. 2 and 18.

By winning the November competition, Teack now joins

See TEACK on Page 23



Teack